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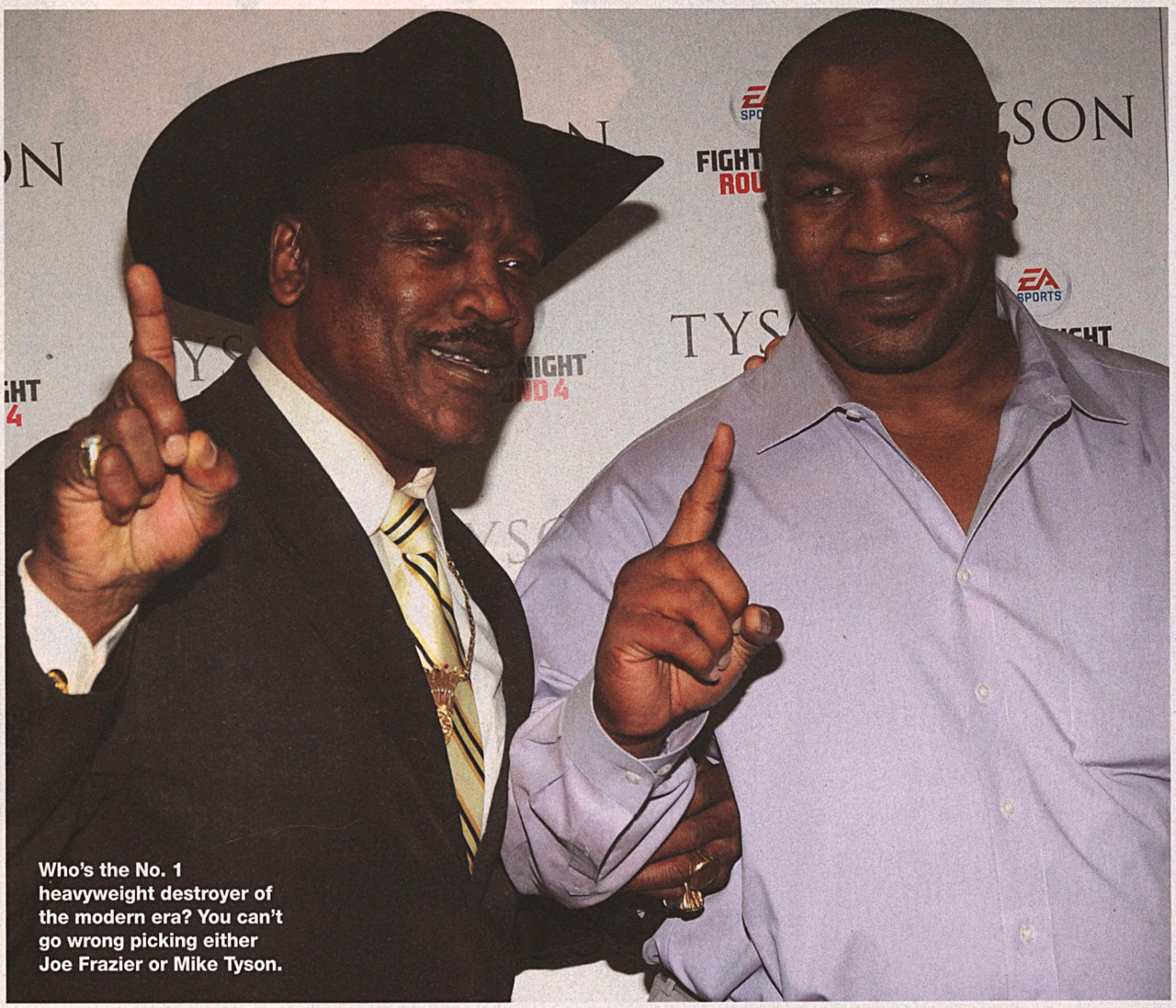

Who's the No. 1 heavyweight destroyer of the modern era? You can't go wrong picking either Joe Frazier or Mike Tyson.

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OPENING SHOT

Errol Spence has friends in high places, including Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. That's good news for Texas fans and the undefeated IBF welterweight beltholder, who blasted Carlos Ocampo in the opening round of his first title defense in his home region on June 16. Spence, whose blowout of Ocampo packed the 12,000-seat Ford Center in Frisco, Texas, said he plans to return home after he "unifies some titles," and if the dream fight against Terence Crawford eventually comes to fruition Mr. Jones might see fit to host it in the 90,000-seat AT&T Stadium in Arlington.

GOOD GUYS CAN FINISH FIRST (OR AT LEAST EVEN)

Kudos to the judges that got the Vargas/Broner fight right (majority draw on April 24 in Brooklyn). Both guys tried to leave it all in the ring, but Broner (true to script) had to ruin a great fight with all the vulgar vitriol he hurled at a class act like Vargas. I've loved boxing all my life and get so worked up with hero/villain scenarios, but heroes so deserve points just on the way they conduct themselves inside and outside the ring.

Ralph Solomons
Savannah, Ga.

WHAT ARE YOU SMOKING?

I just received the July issue of THE RING and I have to disagree with how you have rated some of the fighters. How in the world can you rate George Groves ahead of Gilberto Ramirez? Jermall Charlo and Demetrius Andrade should be rated Nos. 3 and 4 ahead of Saunders and Derevyanchenko. Why was Artem Dalakian raised to No. 1? Please explain! Roman Gonzalez should be higher also.

Henry Gallegos
Highlands Ranch, Colo.

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: As you know, our ratings are determined by a panel, and the question of what to do with Groves after his win over Chris Eubank Jr. produced the longest debate in recent memory. Here's an incomplete summary of the cases made … Groves has the superior body of work, took a risk defending his title in the WBSS and soundly beat a highly ranked, widely favored opponent. Some panelists argued simply that Ramirez would beat Groves, whose previous losses also should hold him back, but Zurdo's case was harmed by his resume, with the biggest wins on his record being a cakewalk against an out-to-lunch Arthur Abraham and a tough scrap with borderline contender Jesse Hart. It's an ever-evolving process, though. There are those on the panel who agree with your other points regarding middleweights and Chocolatito, but they've been outvoted for the time being. And sometimes, as with Dalakian, it's just a matter of attrition: He was No. 3 behind Donnie Nietes and Daigo Higa; Nietes vacated and moved up, Higa missed weight and was suspended by the JBC.

George Groves (right) earned a No. 1 ranking with his win over Chris Eubank Jr.

TWEET OF THE MONTH

TITLES SHOULD MEAN MORE

My frustration is boiling over to anger at the sport that I love. Only in boxing can we have four or more so-called "world champions" in one weight division. That's 68 champions over 17 weight classes. With the exception of cruiserweight, the so-called "junior" weights are not needed. Being an undisputed champion should mean being the best by beating the man who beat the man. Every fighter should, barring injury, be a fighting champion at least three times a year, defend against the No. 1 available contender and two others in the top 10 or 15 in a calendar year.

Let's stop chasing the four so-called belts, because the reality is that on the rare occasion that they are unified, the next minute fighters are being stripped and we always end up back at square one. By all means, beltholders should be recognized and have the right to make a living, but the reality is that the landscape of the sport that I love has changed and been devalued. The lineal champion should be the man who beat the man, should be a fighting champion, should meet the best available contenders and be a role model.

Lastly, just hold this thought: Once upon a time, we knew who the champion was when he entered the ring, and he did not even have to have a belt around his waist – or several, for that matter.

Franco Sepede
Loughborough, England

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Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas

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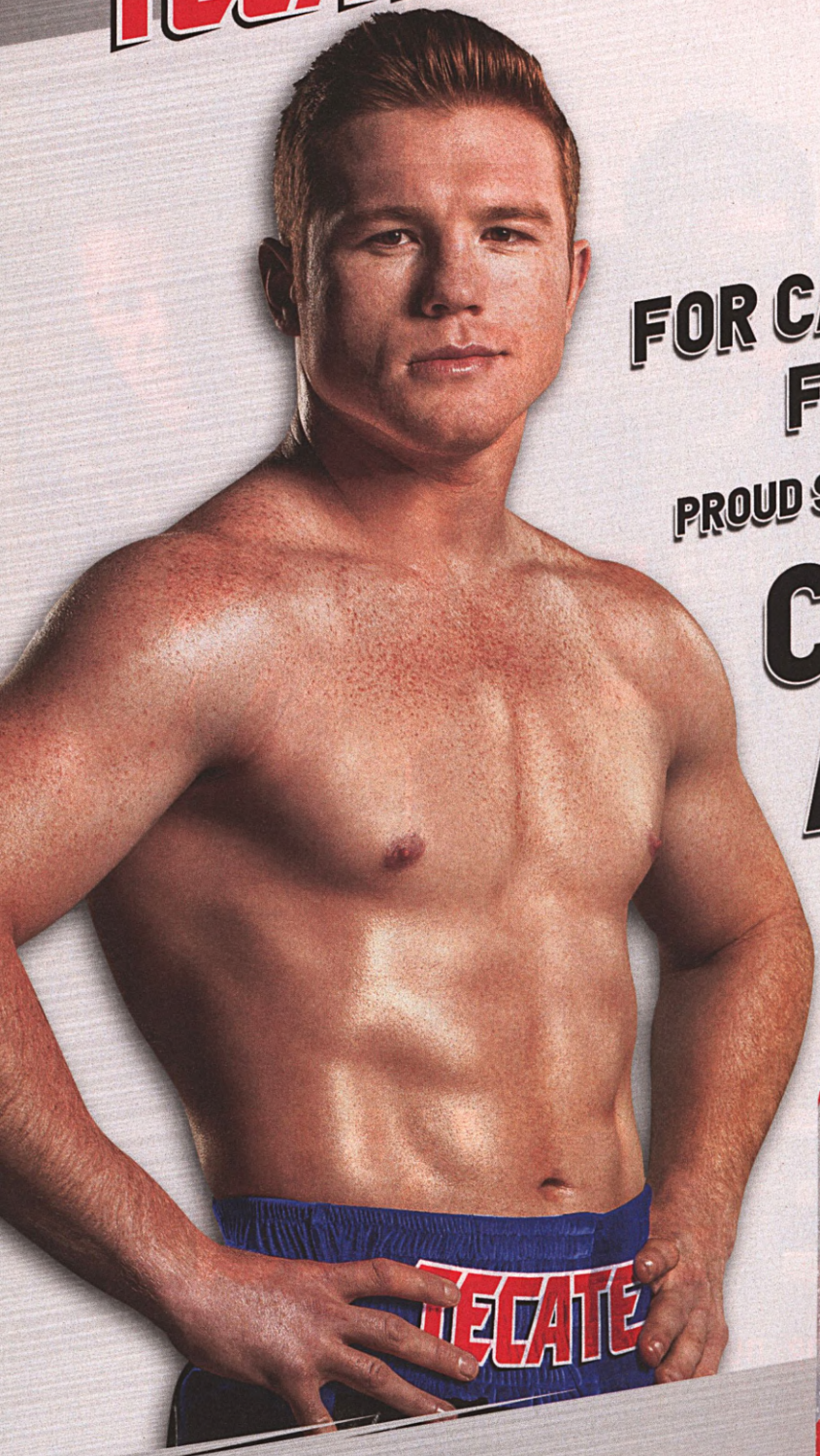

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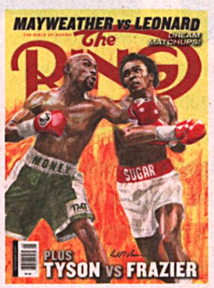
RINGSIDE

BY DOUGLASS FISCHER

LIGHTEN UP, IT'S JUST FANTASY

This issue's beautifully painted cover, by artist Richard Slone, is sure to catch the attention of boxing aficionados and spark lively debate about which American legend was better. Sugar Ray Leonard and Floyd Mayweather Jr. were boxing's poster boys for glamour and dominance during their respective eras. Given their otherworldly talent, sublime skillsets and fierce competitive spirit, you HAVE to spend at least a few minutes imagining how their styles and mentalities would have clashed in the ring had they been able to meet in their primes.

Or maybe you just don't give a shit. I get that. "Dream fights" – or mythical matchups, as I've taken to calling them in my weekly mailbag column on RingTV.com – are not for everyone.



I'm aware that for each diehard fan nerding out on the thousands of dream fight scenarios that exist in boxing, there are two or three hardcore heads that want nothing to do with imagining how fights between boxers from different eras (or between peers from the same era who never fought) would have played out.

Personally, I LOVE mythical matchups. I get dozens of them every week from boxing fans submitting emails for the mailbag, and I always include a couple in each column. I engage in daily mythical matchup debates via Twitter with fellow fanatics that I respect, including BoxingScene.com columnist Cliff Rold (@RoldBoxing), trainer/columnist Stephen Edwards (@BreadmanBoxing), YouTube analyst Lee Wylie (@leewylieboxing) and RING Managing Editor Tom Gray (@Tom_Gray_Boxing) among other knowledgeable observers/historians.

The debates never turn into nasty arguments. It's just fun. For me, working out the varied style matchups are akin to brain teasers, almost like doing a morning crossword puzzle.

But if dream fights aren't for you, that's OK. As a lifelong comic book fan, I know there are levels to geekiness. I'm a grown-ass man who collects so many monthly titles I'm literally running out of room in my house and garage, but I don't watch the superhero TV shows, never attend comic cons, and haven't had the urge to indulge in cosplay. Having said that, I have no problem with any adult who DVRs *The Flash* and *Black Lightning*, plans family vacations around the various conventions or feels the need to dress up as Green Lantern or Supergirl when attending said cons.

So, I won't apologize to the fans that may be turned off by this month's excellent cover story by Mr. Gray or Lee Groves' wonderfully geeky CompuBox-stat analyses of the Leonard-Mayweather and Mike Tyson-Joe Frazier mythical matchups. As I told my wife after she blurted out "That's not how mutation works!" when we saw the first X-Men movie together: Lighten up, it's just fantasy.

And this brand of fantasy has been part of boxing fascination for decades. This publication has devoted several covers to dream-fight debates going back to the April 1949 issue, which featured Joe Louis vs. Jack Dempsey, and more recently with the 2003 Collector's Annual, which spotlighted Muhammad Ali vs. Tyson (see From The Archives, pages 62-63).

This issue includes plenty of REAL news and history – from Tyson Fury's return to the rise of Olympians Natasha Jonas and Nico Hernandez to fight coverage from around the globe – as always. However, as sure as superhero movies spawn sequels, you can count on seeing more mythical matchups in future issues of THE RING.

ROUND 1

FIGHTER OF THE MO... ★ NEW FACES ★ AND MORE!

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

NAOYA INOUE

The Fighter of the Month came down to two unbeaten pound-for-pounders: Naoya Inoue and Terence Crawford, both of whom scored impressive stoppages against RING-ranked fighters in their debuts at a third weight class. Crawford, a former RING lightweight and junior welterweight champ, earned the WBO welterweight title with a ninth-round TKO of Jeff Horn on June 9. But we went with Inoue, a former 108- and 115-pound titleholder who blasted Jamie McDonnell in one round in his first fight at bantamweight on May 25. Crawford is at his peak and a more complete fighter than Inoue, who only has 16 pro bouts, but the 25-year-old Japanese phenom's future looks brighter. Boxing politics will keep Crawford from facing fellow welterweight stars Errol Spence Jr. and Keith Thurman for the foreseeable future, but Inoue will face the top 118-pounders, including titleholders Zolani Tete, Ryan Burnett and Emmanuel Rodriguez, in the upcoming World Boxing Super Series. So you can expect more FOTM awards for The Monster.

NEW FACES

MARK MAGSAYO

BY ANSON WAINWRIGHT

Mark Magsayo is considered one of the brightest young contenders in the talent-laden featherweight division. The 23-year-old Filipino has won all 18 fights since turning professional in 2013 and is ranked No. 1 by two of the four major sanctioning bodies (the WBC and WBO).

Magsayo is an exciting, sometimes reckless fighter, and like most young boxers from the Philippines he idolizes Manny Pacquiao and has aspirations of becoming a world champion.

"That is my goal," Magsayo told THE RING. "I want to follow in Manny's footsteps. There is only one Manny, and I want to make my own name to make my family, friends and country proud."

"Magnifico" was born in Tacloban City and grew up 130 miles away in Tagbilaran City. When he was 8 years old, he sold ice cream. One day while he was doing his rounds, he saw a fight on TV; it was Pacquiao vs. Marco Antonio Barrera. It caught the youngster's attention.

"I saw fighting on the TV. I couldn't stop watching it," Magsayo said of his introduction to boxing. "I sold all the ice cream and then went to watch. I saw Manny and realized he was from the Philippines. It made me want to try boxing too."

Magsayo boxed over 200 times as an amateur, winning eight national titles, and transitioned seamlessly into the professional ranks in 2013. In his 2015 U.S. debut, he caught the eye of Southern California journalist Steve Kim, who was a fixture at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Boxing Club when it became a hotbed for Filipino talent in the peak Pacquiao years.

"I think he's a good young fighter," said Kim. "He's aggressive, fairly crowd-pleasing. I think he's part of a new generation of Filipino fighters that may not have the pressure of trying to live off the accomplishments of Manny Pacquiao.

"Fighters of, say, seven years ago had a lot of pressure to be the next Manny Pacquiao, especially if they're left-handed, but now we're seeing a new generation of fighters from that part of the world – like Romero Duno, for instance – who are really tough, hard-nosed fighters, and I think it serves them well.

"It'll be interesting to see how he reacts in the upper reaches of the sport, but he seems to be a durable guy and well-conditioned."

Since first fighting in the U.S., Magsayo has continued his upward ascent in the 126-pound division, besting durable gatekeeper Ramiro Robles in September 2016 and Shota Hayashi in his most recent outing. He was far more composed and controlled in those bouts than he was during his thrill-a-minute brawl with two-time title challenger Chris Avalos in April 2016, when he had to get off the canvas to stop the American in six rounds.

"He has matured quite fast for his age and number of fights," said Filipino journalist Dennis Principe. "For him to come back from a knockdown against Avalos and win the fight in spectacular fashion is a huge statement, to say the least.

"But in scanning the 126 landscape, he needs to step up his opposition real quick, noting how the division is being dominated by fighters who are at the pound-for-pound level."

Magsayo's managerial arrangement with Tony Aldeguer expired last year, and his deal with ALA Promotions ended in May. The ambitious Filipino elected to sign with Malaysian businessman/manager Vikram Sivapragasam and Las Vegas-based Cameron Dunkin of N.O.W. Boxing Promotions, who previously worked with Nonito Donaire.

"We decided we needed a change," Magsayo said. "My career is at a very important stage and once I met Vikram, I had 100 percent faith in him. He looks out for his fighters and wants the best for them, and then when I knew he worked with Cameron I was sold. I spoke to Nonito and he told me, 'There's nobody better at guiding your career than Cameron.'"

The hope is that Magsayo can add his name to the rich boxing tapestry of the Philippines and become his country's 42nd world champion.

"I am really excited to start this journey with Mark," said Sivapragasam. "He has all the tools to succeed at the highest level and become very popular. He has a fan-friendly style and has an infectious personality that I think people will like." RING

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter@AnsonWainwright.,

ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. With this issue featuring a mythical matchup between Sugar Ray Leonard and Floyd Mayweather Jr., it was only natural for regular contributor Gregg Morgan to link them. But not before connecting Leonard to his namesake, Sugar Ray Robinson. From Robinson-Moyer to Mayweather-De La Hoya, the lineage spans 45½ years:

Sugar Ray Robinson fought

Denny Moyer, who fought

Rafael Rodriguez, who fought

Sugar Ray Leonard, who fought

Hector Camacho Sr., who fought

Oscar De La Hoya, who fought

Floyd Mayweather Jr.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

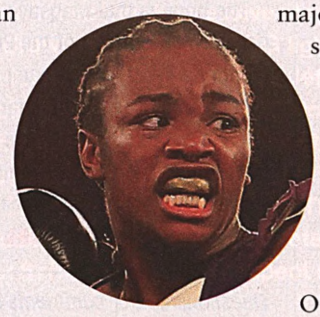
TWO MINUTES OR THREE?

Ronda Rousey demonstrated that a female mixed martial arts combatant can be a bigger draw than her male counterparts. But no female boxer has come close to achieving the level of acceptance and fame that the top men in boxing have.

One of many reasons for this disparity is that the overwhelming majority of women's boxing matches are waged in two-minute rounds rather than three.

Most state athletic commissions default to two-minute stanzas for women, although New York, California, and Nevada have permitted three-minute rounds in instances where both boxers agreed.

World Boxing Council president Mauricio Sulaiman has proclaimed that the WBC will "never" sanction three-minute rounds for women's bouts that are more than 10 rounds in duration.



The case for two-minute rounds for women rests partly on tradition and partly on an interpretation of medical data.

Dramatic knockouts are largely absent from women's boxing, primarily because the women don't hit nearly as hard as men. That said, relying on medical research conducted at UCLA, Sulaiman has declared, "The bone structure of women is different than men, specifically in the neck region. Women have almost 80 percent more concussion probability than men and they have a slower recovery time. The more time you fight, the higher the dehydration and fatigue. The risk factor increases. It is also a fact that women have stronger symptoms after concussion and suffer more pain."

Jill Diamond, co-chair of the WBC Women's Championship Committee, adds, "It's not about the ability of women to fight three-minute rounds. It's a safety issue. Women are capable of doing it, but at what cost?"

Diamond also maintains, "A majority of the women I've spoken with don't want three-minute rounds. And if they do want three-minute rounds, they expect to be paid more for it."

These thoughts are echoed by two-time Olympic gold medalist **Claressa Shields**, who says, "If fighting three minutes will get us paid equally to the men, I'm all for it. Otherwise, I'll take two. I've been fighting for two minutes since the amateurs. With two minutes, you don't have time to feel someone out. You start fast, you go fast and you finish fast. I can go three minutes. I spar three-minute rounds with men all the time. But I think two is better."

By contrast, Olympic gold medalist Katie Taylor supports the idea of women fighting three-minute rounds. And promoter Barry McGuigan told the Mirror that the two-minute limit is "disrespectful."

"Women are either boxers or they are not, and therefore should be allowed to contest championship bouts over 12 three-minute rounds like the men. Anything less is sexist and fails to recognize the quality, commitment, and hard work that women put into the sport."

Here, one might also note that in UFC bouts, both women and men fight five-minute rounds with no difference in the number of rounds per fight based on gender.

That brings us back to the medical research.

Dr. Margaret Goodman has served as chief ringside physician and chair of the medical advisory board for the Nevada State Athletic Commission and is the founder and CEO of the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association. She's one of the most knowledgeable advocates for fighter safety in the world today.

"My impression," Dr. Goodman says, "is that the WBC is relying on old data and incomplete data."

This thought is backed by Dr. Charles Bernick, director of the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health at the Cleveland Clinic, who is overseeing the most comprehensive study to date of brain damage suffered by fighters.

Last year, Bernick told writer Tom Gerbasi, "If you take a woman fighter and matched her up to a male that has the same number of fights, the same age, the

same education, we don't really find much difference looking at the brain itself or even how they test out on certain reaction time and processing speed and so on. You can always find some differences, but they're not huge. Nothing has come out that women are more prone to long-term changes. The biggest risk factor is the number of blows you're on the receiving end of. Anytime you reduce that, you're going to, in some sense, improve the safety of that sport. But I don't know if it's really been established yet that for women that's going to make a big difference. It's making a policy change based on indirect evidence. It certainly can't hurt from a safety standpoint. But how much it's going to help, I don't know."

All of the above leads to a host of collateral issues.

Would a state athletic commission countenance a men's fight with four-minute rounds if both boxers agreed to it? A 20-round championship fight?

"Look," Dr. Goodman says, "exposure to head blows isn't good for anyone. We know that. The less the better. One-minute rounds would do less damage than two-minute rounds. With three-minute rounds for women, there would be more damage. That's a given. There would be less damage in men's boxing if rounds were cut from three minutes to two.

"But there are other ways to make boxing safer," Dr. Goodman continues. "You make boxing safer with proper pre-fight medical screening. You make boxing safer with good referees and doctors and cornermen who know when to stop a fight. I favor three-minute rounds for women."

And suppose it turns out that, in fact, women are more easily concussed, suffer worse symptoms and take longer to heal than men?

"If that's true," Dr. Goodman answers, "then maybe women shouldn't be fighting at all."

★ ★ ★ ★

Twenty-five years ago, Craig Hamilton founded JO Sports, one of the leading boxing memorabilia companies in the world today. When Hamilton started JO Sports, roughly 85 percent of his business came from the United States. That number is now down to 40 percent because of burgeoning sales in Europe.

Recently, Hamilton offered some thoughts for those interested in the boxing memorabilia market.

(1) The value of an item is determined by its historical significance, scarcity and condition. A photograph signed by Cus D'Amato is worth more than a photo signed by Mike Tyson because of scarcity. A nicely signed photo of Tex Rickard will sell for between $800 and $1,000, while a nicely signed photo of Don King can be bought for $30. Again, scarcity is the key.

(2) "Vintage" signatures signed while a fighter is active are worth more than a signature from the fighter's later years.

(3) Most mass-produced items created for the memorabilia market fade in value. Limited-edition LeRoy Neiman lithographs of Muhammad Ali signed by Neiman and Ali are an exception to this rule.

That brings us to Ali.

When Muhammad died in 2016, the market was saturated with Ali memorabilia. Many potential sellers had been waiting for him to die in the belief that his passing would increase the value of their holdings. But so much content went on sale in mid-2016 that the price of Ali memorabilia actually dropped a bit.

Still, in Hamilton's opinion, Ali will always be a big seller. Babe Ruth has been dead for 70 years, and Ruth memorabilia has retained its value.

Hamilton says that, to his knowledge, the most valuable pieces of boxing memorabilia that exist today are the gloves Cassius Clay wore when he defeated Sonny Liston in 1964. They were sold at auction in 2014 for $836,500. But that's a small number compared to what Hamilton estimates the "Holy Grail" of Ali collectors – Clay's RING Magazine championship belt – would bring if it were found.

Ali cornerman Bundini Brown, who died in 1987, is believed to have had the belt at one time. It's unlikely that the belt was broken down for its content, because it was made of base metal and contained no precious stones. Possibly Bundini sold it. But it has never surfaced.

"You could start the bidding on that one at five million dollars," Hamilton posits.

Many collectors build their collection around a particular fighter, class of individuals (such as famous trainers) or fights at a particular venue (e.g. Madison Square Garden). Others look for a particular type of collectible, such as vintage posters, uncut fight tickets or on-site programs. Autographs are very much in demand.

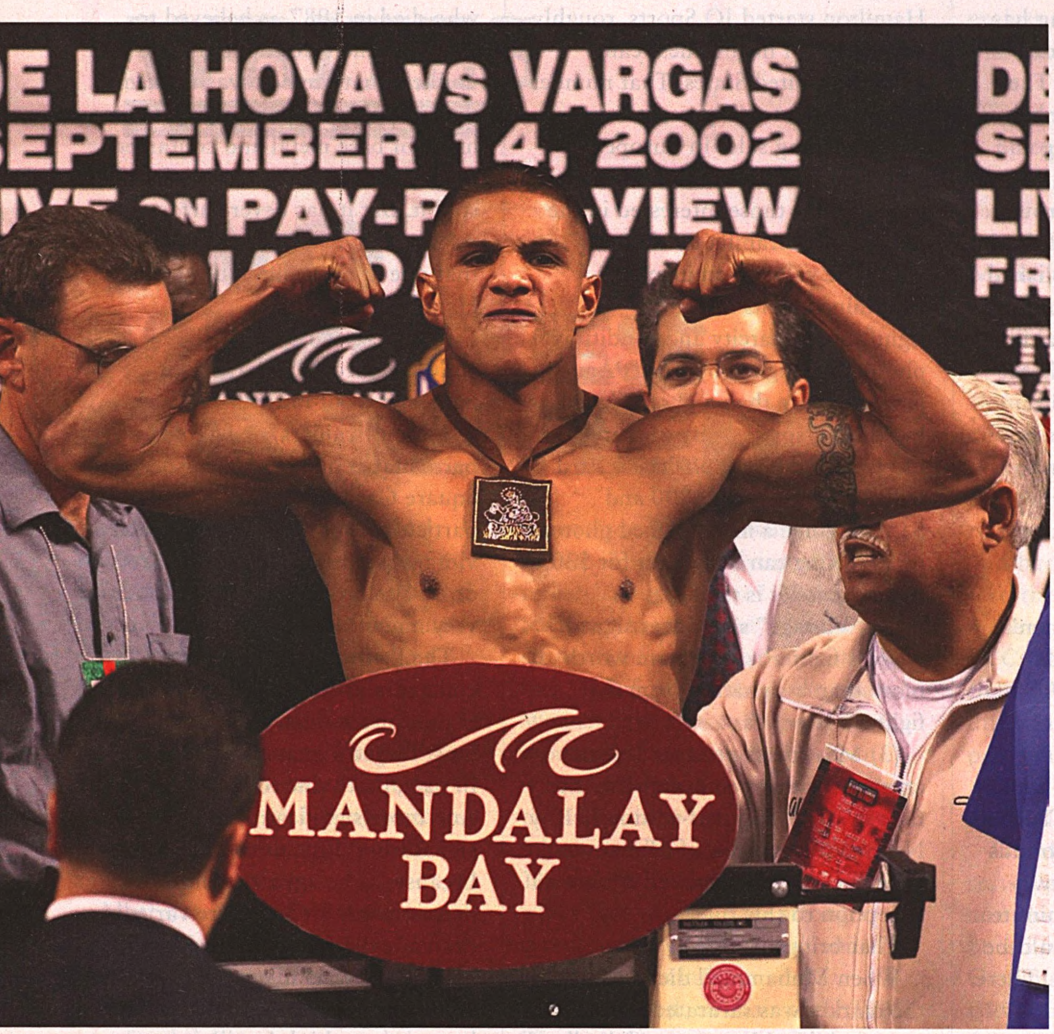
The fly in the ointment for collectors of Ali signatures is that, in Hamilton's words, "It's probably the most forged signature of all time." In part, that's due to heavy demand. And more significantly, Ali's signature is difficult to authenticate because, as he aged and his health deteriorated, his signature varied dramatically from day to day.

Hamilton has this advice for collectors: "Don't buy something because you think it will appreciate in value. Buy what you like. Then you can enjoy it while you have it. And make sure it's real. Check the provenance. Buy from reputable sellers. Make sure you get what you're paying for." RING

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – There Will Always Be Boxing – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

BEST I FACED

BY ANSON WAINWRIGHT



FERNANDO VARGAS

Fernando Vargas was a shooting star who rose to prominence at a young age, becoming the youngest junior middleweight titleholder in history. And he burned out just as quickly.

Vargas was born and raised in a working class home in Oxnard, California. He began boxing when he was 12 and rapidly became a sensation.

"I was the youngest in history to win a national tournament in an open division," Vargas told THE RING. "I was 16 years of age. My record can never be broken, because kids my age were getting knocked out, so they changed it to 17. I became number one (amateur ranked in the U.S.) at 132 (pounds), at 139, 147 – every time I moved up, I became number one."

At just 18 he qualified for the 1996 Olympics, then controversially lost in the second round and decided to make the leap to the pros. His services were heavily courted before he signed with Main Events and began his journey in March 1997.

"El Feroz" ("The Ferocious One") rattled off 14 consecutive wins, all by KO in six rounds or less, to earn a shot at the vastly more experienced Yori Boy Campas, a veteran with a 72-2 record at the time, for the IBF junior middleweight title. Vargas boxed terrifically in what he says was his best win and proudest moment, forcing the heavy-handed Mexican to surrender after the seventh round.

Vargas defended the IBF belt five times in a two-year span, including victories against former world titleholders Raul Marquez (TKO 11), Winky Wright (MD 12) and Ike Quartey (UD 12).

Those wins set Vargas up for one of the biggest boxing events of 2000, his showdown with former welterweight champ and fellow unbeaten 154-pound titleholder Felix Trinidad. Vargas had to get off the canvas twice in a tumultuous opening round. He dropped the Puerto Rican hero in the fourth but was ultimately stopped in the final round of a barnburner.

"I gave everything in that fight. I gave everything in every fight,"

Ferocious face: Fernando Vargas flexes with intensity during the weigh-in for his "Bad Blood" showdown with arch rival Oscar De La Hoya in 2002.

Vargas said defiantly. "Should I have waited? Yeah. But I'm a champion, too. I'd been fighting the best, so that's what I did and I left everything in the ring that night. I could have died, but I would have died a proud man, never giving up, never quitting. That's what champions do."

Vargas rebounded with two wins, claiming the WBA strap. All the while he craved a match with Oscar De La Hoya to settle an old grudge.

"I looked up to Oscar as a kid," said Vargas. "I went to go spar with Oscar in Big Bear and I was running with Robert Garcia. I didn't know the path, and I fell. Robert was in front of me and he didn't know that I fell; he had on earphones. Oscar ran by me and laughed and kept running. From that day I said, 'One day I'm going to beat this motherfucker.'"

The bout took place in September 2002, and Vargas channeled his animosity into bullying De La Hoya early. As the fight wore on, however, De La Hoya's punches took their toll and he was able to stop Vargas in the 11th round.

Afterward, Vargas was found to have a banned substance in his system (the steroid stanozolol) and served a nine-month suspension.

He returned and reeled off four wins before looking like a shadow of his former self in losing twice against Shane Mosley and then to Ricardo Mayorga. He retired in 2007 with a record of 26-5 (22 knockouts).

Vargas, now 40, lives in Las Vegas and is married with four children. He is still involved in boxing, training two of his sons – both of whom are promising amateurs ("The legacy lives on," said Vargas) as well as several pros. He has established the Fernando Vargas Fighting Foundation for inner-city kids. Also, he and De La Hoya have since sorted out their differences and are now friends.

Vargas graciously took time to speak to THE RING about the best he fought in 10 key categories.

BEST JAB

IKE QUARTEY: He had a strong jab; he was a great jabber. He was known for his jab and I definitely know why. It was solid when it would land. What you've got to do with someone who has a great jab is out-jab him, and I was able to out-jab him and win the fight.

BEST DEFENSE

OSCAR DE LA HOYA: I put a lot of pressure on him, but he definitely had the best defense. He had great head movement. The jab was definitely key for him, his ring I.Q. … he was a great fighter all around.

FASTEST HANDS

QUARTEY: Mosley was fast, but it wasn't out of this world. Ike Quartey was fast. His jab was fast and his punches were fast.

BEST FOOTWORK

DE LA HOYA: I was trying to cut the ring, but it was difficult to catch him. When I got him on the ropes I'd try to keep him there, and then he'd get out. He had great ring generalship and boxing ability.

BEST CHIN

SHANE MOSLEY: I think Oscar had a great chin. Mosley had a great chin too. I was hitting Mosley with everything but the kitchen sink and he could take it.

SMARTEST

DE LA HOYA: I'm going to have to go with Oscar again. He was very intelligent. If you didn't move your head after every combination, he was going to get you. If you left yourself open for something, he was going to catch you. He knew how to use the ring.

STRONGEST

FELIX TRINIDAD: I never felt anything like that in my life. I think the wraps helped him. I know that after his fight with (Bernard) Hopkins, they found his hand weren't wrapped correctly. That made my career shorter. I was trying to keep him off me and I couldn't; it was constant pressure. I was trying to box and punch, too, but he was the strongest.

BEST PUNCHER

TRINIDAD: Him, but now I know why! I didn't even know I got knocked out. I was never down in the amateurs or pros, and I went down five times and I don't remember half the fight. But I know I fought with all my heart.

When I was on the way to the hospital in the ambulance with my wife after the fight, I said, "Baby, did it look bad when I went down?" And she said, "You got up every single time." And I said, "How many times did I go down?" I didn't know I went down five times and I got up five times. That's the warrior that went in. It's in your DNA. I don't remember getting up, but I know if I have a heartbeat in my body I'm going to get up. Regardless if I'm in a fight or in life, it doesn't matter. I'm not going to lay down.

I felt like I was getting hit by a bat. It was like an explosion in my head. I couldn't believe it. You can see by my expression in the first knockdown. I know I'd have lasted longer in the game if I didn't take that fight. It's a risk – I take the good with the bad.

BOXING SKILLS

DE LA HOYA: Oscar had the best boxing skills. He could do everything. He could box, he could punch, he could go forward and he knew what he was doing.

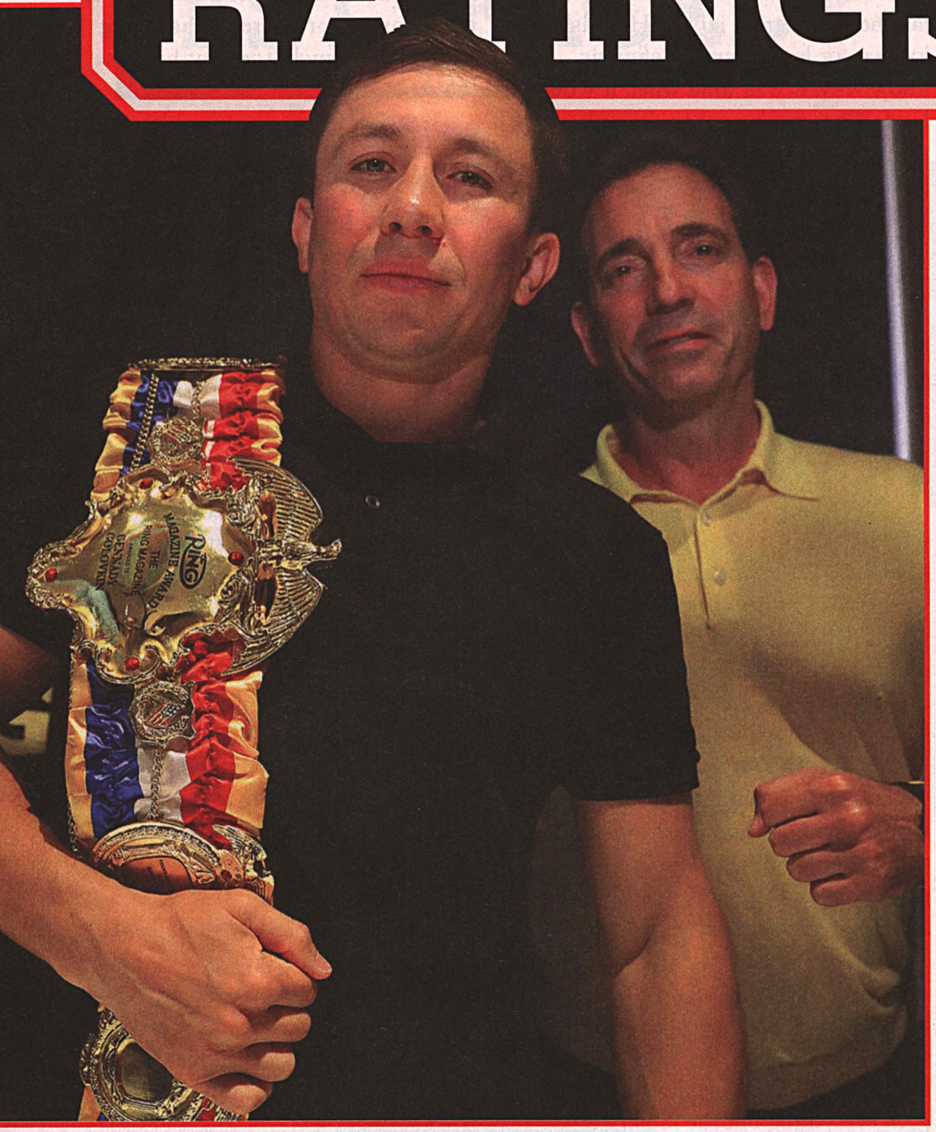
BEST OVERALL

DE LA HOYA: I think Oscar's got to be the best boxer I ever faced in the ring. I beat five world champions and I only lost to greats and world champions. I think Oscar was better than anyone else I fought.

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

RATINGS

POUND FOR POUND ★ RATINGS ANALYSIS ★ THE RING RATINGS



There's debate about who's No. 1 pound-for-pound, but Gennady Golovkin is still "The Man" in the mythical rankings of this publication, and now he's got a RING belt to make it official.

POUND FOR POUND

1 **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 38-0-1 (34 KOs)

2 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)

3 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 33-0-0 (24 KOs)

4 **MIKEY GARCIA**
U.S. • 38-0-0 (30 KOs)

5 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 16-0-0 (14 KOs)

6 **SRISASKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
Thailand • 45-4-1 (40 KOs)

7 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

8 **SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 32-2-1 (28 KOs)

9 **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines • 41-1-4 (23 KOs)

10 **OLEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND: Naoya Inoue (No. 7 last month) became a three-division titleholder in just his 16th pro fight, and he did it in his bantamweight debut by destroying the No. 2-ranked fighter … No. 6 is right this way, Mr. Inoue. Two departures then created a pair of vacancies – Canelo Alvarez (No. 4) was dropped in conjunction with stripping his middleweight championship, and Guillermo Rigondeaux (No. 10) was dumped because nobody can remember why he's there. Those spots were claimed by Donnie Nietes (No. 9) and Oleksandr Usyk (No. 10).

HEAVYWEIGHTS: We here at THE RING have given Tyson Fury the benefit of many doubts in the past, so another won't hurt… After more than 2½ years, Fury finally made his return and was installed at No. 10 after a sloppy fourth-round stoppage of sacrificial lamb (and compared to Fury, that's about how big he looked) Sefer Seferi. That pushed Tony Bellew off the list.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No change.

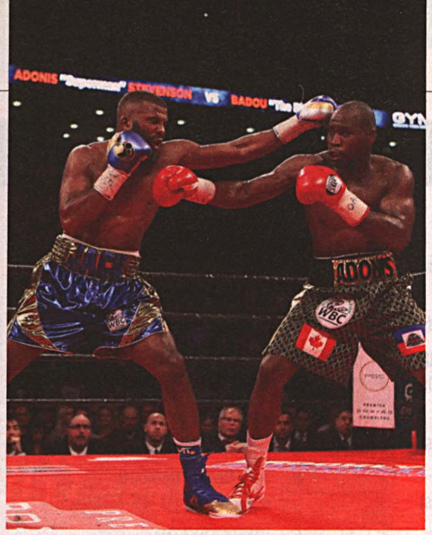
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Adonis Stevenson (No. 2 last month) and Badou Jack (No. 8) fought to a majority draw; Jack sabotaged himself with a slow start but looked good, so he was raised to No. 4 while Stevenson, who faded late but saved himself with a damaging body shot in the 10th, was lowered to No. 3.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: As a result of his clenbuterol-related suspension, Canelo Alvarez was stripped of his RING title and the championship tier was left vacant.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Jermell Charlo held at No. 2 after defending his title with a majority decision win over Austin Trout (No. 7 at the time). Trout has now lost three of his last four fights, but all three losses were against top talents and he remains among the best in the world, so he stayed on the list at No. 10.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Terence Crawford's first opponent at 147 was Pacquiao-popper Jeff Horn,



Badou Jack (left) had to settle for another controversial draw after his spirited battle with WBC light heavyweight titleholder Adonis Stevenson.

and quite frankly, Horn (No. 5 last month) never stood a chance. Crawford took his belt with a nine-round beatdown and came in at No. 3, while the Australian was given some leniency for the skills of his tormentor and settled at No. 6. No. 10-rated Yordenis Ugas was pushed off the list.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Undefeated Texan Maurice Hooker arrived at No. 8, new belt in hand, after a split-decision win over former lightweight titleholder Terry Flanagan (unrated). Hooker's arrival bumped Alex Saucedo (No. 10 last month) out of the ratings.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Javier Fortuna (No. 10 last month) fought at 140 and was replaced by undefeated Englishman Lewis Ritson.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Gary Russell Jr. rose from No. 3 to No. 2 after making his yearly appearance (and yearly reminder of what a talented fighter he is) with a unanimous decision over Joseph Diaz, who dropped from No. 7 to No. 8. Lee Selby absorbed a couple head clashes and lots of jabs from Josh Warrington, who took the Welshman's title with a split decision. Warrington climbed from No. 9 to No. 6 and Selby fell from No. 5 to No. 7.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Daniel Roman gained a notch, No. 5 to No. 4, with a UD over No. 7-rated Moises Flores, who was dropped. On the heels of a win over Stuart Hall (unrated), Gavin McDonnell moved in at No. 10.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Jason Moloney earned a bit of ratings security, going from No. 10 to No. 9 after stopping former titleholder Kohei Kono is six rounds. Naoya Inoue then backed up his "Monster" moniker in his first fight at 118 pounds, mauling Jamie McDonnell (No. 2 at the time) in the first round. The drained McDonnell dropped off the list while Inoue moved into the vacant slot at No. 2.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Inoue's move to 118 left No. 1 empty and gave everyone a boost, then Jonas Sultan (No. 9 last month) created another vacancy after losing a unanimous decision to Jerwin Ancajas (No. 4 at the time). No. 9 was filled by undefeated Australian Andrew Moloney and No. 10 was taken by China's Wenfeng Ge, also unbeaten.

FLYWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Hekkie Budler (No. 6 last month) wanted to be the best, so he did what fighters are supposed to do: He went to Japan, challenged RING/IBF/WBA champ Ryoichi Taguchi and won. "The Hexecutioner" thus became the new "C" while Taguchi's strong performance arrested his downfall at the No. 1 contender spot. Just below him, Ken Shiro held on to No. 2 with a second-round knockout of Ganigan Lopez, who slipped from No. 6 to No. 9. Angel Acosta then barely kept his win/KO ratio perfect with a 12th-round stoppage of Carlos Buitrago and jumped from No. 8 to No. 7.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Buitrago, who was rated at No. 8 going into his 108-pound fight against Acosta, was removed from the list and South African Deejay Kriel arrived at No. 10.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C (VACANT)

1 ANTHONY JOSHUA
U.K. • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)

2 DEONTAY WILDER
U.S. • 40-0-0 (39 KOs)

3 ALEXANDER POVETKIN
Russia • 34-1-0 (24 KOs)

4 JOSEPH PARKER
New Zealand • 24-1-0 (18 KOs)

5 LUIS ORTIZ
Cuba • 28-1-0 (24 KOs)

6 DILLIAN WHYTE
U.K. • 23-1-0 (17 KOs)

7 DOMINIC BREAZEALE
U.S. • 19-1-0 (17 KOs)

8 JARRELL MILLER
U.S. • 21-0-1 (18 KOs)

9 ADAM KOWNACKI
U.S. • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

10 TYSON FURY
U.K. • 26-0-0 (19 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 OLEKSANDR USYK
Ukraine • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

2 MURAT GASSIEV
Russia • 26-0-0 (19 KOs)

3 MAIRIS BRIEDIS
Latvia • 23-1-0 (18 KOs)

4 DENIS LEBEDEV
Russia • 30-2-0 (22 KOs)

5 YUNIER DORTICOS
Cuba • 22-1-0 (21 KOs)

6 KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI
Poland • 30-1-0 (19 KOs)

7 MAKSIM VLASOV
Russia • 42-2-0 (25 KOs)

8 KEVIN LERENA
S. Africa • 21-1-0 (9 KOs)

9 ANDREW TABITI
U.S. • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)

10 ILUNGA MAKABU
Congo • 21-2-0 (20 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 SERGEY KOVALEV
Russia • 32-2-1 (28 KOs)

2 DMITRY BIVOL
Russia • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)

3 ADONIS STEVENSON
Canada • 29-1-1 (24 KOs)

4 BADOU JACK
Sweden • 22-1-3 (13 KOs)

5 ELEIDER ALVAREZ
Colombia • 23-0-0 (11 KOs)

6 OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK
Ukraine • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)

7 ARTUR BETERBIEV
Russia • 12-0-0 (12 KOs)

8 SULLIVAN BARRERA
Cuba • 21-2-0 (14 KOs)

9 MARCUS BROWNE
U.S. • 21-0-0 (16 KOs)

10 JOE SMITH JR.
U.S. • 23-2-0 (19 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 GEORGE GROVES
U.K. • 28-3-0 (20 KOs)

2 GILBERTO RAMIREZ
Mexico • 37-0-0 (25 KOs)

3 CALLUM SMITH
U.K. • 24-0-0 (17 KOs)

5 DAVID BENAVIDEZ
U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

6 JOSE UZCATEGUI
Venezuela • 27-2-0 (23 KOs)

7 JAMES DEGALE
U.K. • 24-2-1 (14 KOs)

8 ANTHONY DIRRELL
U.S. • 32-1-1 (24 KOs)

4 CALEB TRUAX
U.S. • 29-4-2 (18 KOs)

9 CHRIS EUBANK JR.
U.K. • 26-2-0 (20 KOs)

10 JUERGEN BRAEHMER
Germany • 49-3-0 (35 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of June 17, 2018

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 GENNADY GOLOVKIN
Kaz. • 38-0-1 (34 KOs)

2 DANIEL JACOBS
U.S. • 34-2-0 (29 KOs)

3 BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
U.K. • 26-0-0 (12 KOs)

4 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO
Ukraine • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)

5 JERMALL CHARLO
U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)

6 RYOTA MURATA
Japan • 14-1-0 (11 KOs)

7 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)

8 DAVID LEMIEUX
Canada • 39-4-0 (33 KOs)

9 HASSAN N'DAM
Cameroon • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)

10 GARY O'SULLIVAN
Ireland • 28-2-0 (20 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 JARRETT HURD
U.S. • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)

2 JERMELL CHARLO
U.S. • 31-0-0 (15 KOs)

3 ERISLANDY LARA
Cuba • 25-3-2 (14 KOs)

4 JAIME MUNGUIA
Mexico • 29-0-0 (25 KOs)

5 BRIAN CASTANO
Argentina • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)

6 LIAM SMITH
U.K. • 26-1-1 (14 KOs)

7 MICHEL SORO
France • 32-2-1 (21 KOs)

8 JULIAN WILLIAMS
U.S. • 25-1-1 (15 KOs)

9 KELL BROOK
U.K. • 37-2-0 (26 KOs)

10 AUSTIN TROUT
U.S. • 31-5-0 (17 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 KEITH THURMAN
U.S. • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)

2 ERROL SPENCE
U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

3 TERENCE CRAWFORD
U.S. • 33-0-0 (24 KOs)

4 SHAWN PORTER
U.S. • 28-2-1 (17 KOs)

5 DANNY GARCIA
U.S. • 34-1-0 (20 KOs)

6 JEFF HORN
Australia • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)

7 MANNY PACQUIAO
Phil. • 59-7-2 (38 KOs)

8 JESSIE VARGAS
U.S. • 28-2-1 (10 KOs)

9 LUCAS MATTHYSSE
Argentina • 39-4-0 (36 KOs)

10 EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS
Lithuania • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 REGIS PROGRAIS
U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)

2 VIKTOR POSTOL
Ukraine • 29-1-0 (12 KOs)

3 KIRYL RELIKH
Belarus • 22-2-0 (19 KOs)

4 JOSE RAMIREZ
U.S. • 22-0-0 (16 KOs)

5 ANTONIO OROZCO
U.S. • 27-0-0 (17 KOs)

6 JOSH TAYLOR
U.K. • 12-0-0 (11 KOs)

7 EDUARD TROYANOVSKY
Russia • 27-1-0 (24 KOs)

8 MAURICE HOOKER
U.S. • 24-0-3 (16 KOs)

9 SERGEY LIPINETS
Russia • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)

10 IVAN BARANCHYK
Russia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)

Top-five light heavyweights Sergey Kovalev (left) and Eleider Alvarez are set to fight on August 4 in Atlantic City.

Jermell Charlo tried his best to KO Austin Trout during his WBC 154-pound title defense on June 9, but the veteran took him the distance.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C VASYL LOMACHENKO
Ukraine • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)

1 JORGE LINARES
Venezuela • 44-4-0 (27 KOs)

2 MIKEY GARCIA
U.S. • 38-0-0 (30 KOs)

3 ROBERT EASTER
U.S. • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)

4 RAYMUNDO BELTRAN
Mexico • 35-7-1 (21 KOs)

5 RICHARD COMMEY
Ghana • 26-2-0 (23 KOs)

6 ANTHONY CROLLA
U.K. • 33-6-3 (13 KOs)

7 LUKE CAMPBELL
U.K. • 18-2-0 (15 KOs)

8 DEJAN ZLATICANIN
Montenegro • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)

9 YVAN MENDY
France • 40-4-1 (19 KOs)

10 LEWIS RITSON
U.K. • 16-0-0 (10 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 MIGUEL BERCHELT
Mexico • 33-1-0 (29 KOs)

2 GERVONTA DAVIS
U.S. • 20-0-0 (19 KOs)

3 ALBERTO MACHADO
P.R. • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

4 FRANCISCO VARGAS
Mexico • 25-1-2 (18 KOs)

5 TEVIN FARMER
U.S. • 25-4-1 (5 KOs)

6 MIGUEL ROMAN
Mexico • 59-12-0 (46 KOs)

7 JEZREEL CORRALES
Panama • 22-2-0 (8 KOs)

8 JHONNY GONZALEZ
Mexico • 66-10-0 (54 KOs)

9 CHRISTOPHER DIAZ
Puerto Rico • 23-0-0 (15 KOs)

10 EVGENY CHUPRAKOV
Russia • 19-0-0 (10 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 LEO SANTA CRUZ
U.S. • 35-1-1 (19 KOs)

2 GARY RUSSELL JR.
U.S. • 29-1-0 (17 KOs)

3 CARL FRAMPTON
U.K. • 25-1-0 (14 KOs)

4 OSCAR VALDEZ
Mexico • 24-0-0 (19 KOs)

5 ABNER MARES
Mexico • 31-3-1 (15 KOs)

6 JOSH WARRINGTON
U.K. • 27-0-0 (6 KOs)

7 LEE SELBY
U.K. • 26-2-0 (9 KOs)

8 JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
U.S. • 26-1-0 (14 KOs)

9 JESUS ROJAS
P.R. • 26-1-2 (19 KOs)

10 SCOTT QUIGG
U.K. • 34-2-2 (25 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
Cuba • 17-1-0 (11 KOs)

2 ISAAC DOGBOE
Ghana • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)

3 REY VARGAS
Mexico • 32-0-0 (22 KOs)

4 DANIEL ROMAN
U.S. • 25-2-1 (9 KOs)

5 JESSIE MAGDALENO
U.S. • 25-1-0 (18 KOs)

6 DIEGO DE LA HOYA
Mexico • 21-0-0 (10 KOs)

7 RYOSUKE IWASA
Japan • 25-2-0 (16 KOs)

8 TOMOKI KAMEDA
Japan • 35-2-0 (20 KOs)

9 EMANUEL NAVARRETE
Mexico • 25-1-0 (22 KOs)

10 GAVIN MCDONNELL
U.K. • 20-1-2 (5 KOs)

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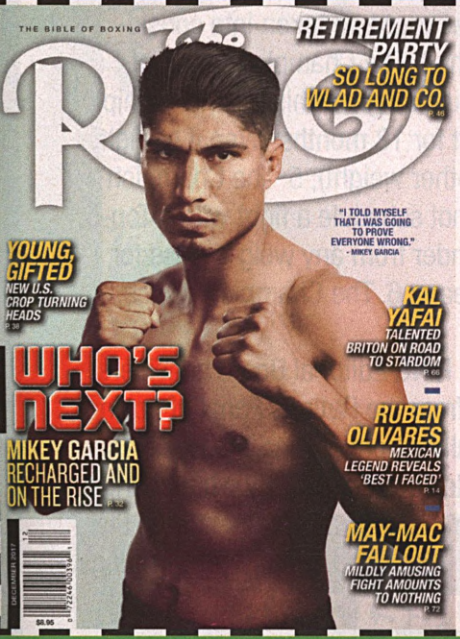

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RATINGS

Through fights of June 17, 2018

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 27-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **NAOYA INOUE**
  Japan • 16-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **3** **RYAN BURNETT**
  U.K. • 19-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **4** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  P.R. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
  Dom. Rep. • 20-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **6** **ZHANAT ZHAKIYANOV**
  Kaz. • 27-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **7** **LIBORIO SOLIS**
  Venezuela • 26-5-1 (12 KOs)
- **8** **LEE HASKINS**
  U.K. • 35-4-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **10** **NORDINE OUBAALI**
  France • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

- **C** **SRISASKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 45-4-1 (40 KOs)
- **1** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
  Mexico • 36-3-0 (25 KOs)
- **2** **KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **JERWIN ANCAJAS**
  Phil. • 30-1-1 (20 KOs)
- **4** **RAU'SHEE WARREN**
  U.S. • 16-2-0 (4 KOs)
- **5** **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
  Nicaragua • 46-2-0 (38 KOs)
- **6** **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
  Puerto Rico • 17-3-0 (14 KOs)
- **7** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 36-3-1 (27 KOs)
- **8** **REX TSO**
  China • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **9** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **10** **WENFENG GE**
  China • 10-0-0 (6 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **ARTEM DALAKIAN**
  Ukraine • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **2** **MORUTI MTHALANE**
  S. Africa • 35-2-0 (24 KOs)
- **3** **ANDREW SELBY**
  U.K. • 10-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **4** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 27-3-0 (18 KOs)
- **5** **SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 16-1-2 (9 KOs)
- **6** **KOSEI TANAKA**
  Japan • 11-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **7** **MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 29-7-3 (16 KOs)
- **8** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 28-4-1 (20 KOs)
- **9** **MUHAMMAD WASEEM**
  Pakistan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **10** **VINCENT LEGRAND**
  France • 27-0-0 (16 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

- **C** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 32-3-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
  Japan • 27-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **2** **KEN SHIRO**
  Japan • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **MILAN MELINDO**
  Phil. • 37-3-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 20-0-1 (16 KOs)
- **5** **PEDRO GUEVARA**
  Mexico • 31-3-1 (18 KOs)
- **6** **FELIX ALVARADO**
  Nicaragua • 33-2-0 (29 KOs)
- **7** **ANGEL ACOSTA**
  P.R. • 18-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **8** **AKIRA YAEGASHI**
  Japan • 26-6-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **GANIGAN LOPEZ**
  Mexico • 34-8-0 (19 KOs)
- **10** **REY LORETO**
  Phil. • 24-14-0 (16 KOs)

Jeff Horn wasn't able to defend himself or mount much offense against Terence Crawford during their WBO welterweight title bout on June 9.

Maurice Hooker drops to his knees after upsetting Terry Flanagan in the former lightweight beltholder's hometown of Manchester, England.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
  Thailand • 50-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
  Thailand • 17-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI**
  Japan • 10-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **4** **RYUYA YAMANAKA**
  Japan • 16-2-0 (5 KOs)
- **4** **BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 24-3-3 (10 KOs)
- **5** **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 21-4-1 (13 KOs)
- **7** **SIMPHIWE KHONCO**
  S. Africa • 18-5-0 (7 KOs)
- **8** **TATSUYA FUKUHARA**
  Japan • 20-6-6 (7 KOs)
- **9** **TSUBASA KOURA**
  Japan • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **10** **DEEJAY KRIEL**
  S. Africa • 14-1-1 (6 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED
RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

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GRAB A RINGSIDE SEAT AT ONE OF THE MOST TANTALIZING MYTHICAL MATCHUPS OF ALL TIME

By **Tom Gray**

MONEY MAY VS. SUGAR RAY

Sugar Ray Leonard and Floyd Mayweather Jr. had the best blend of natural talent, technique and ring smarts of their eras. Mayweather had the edge in defense and accuracy. Leonard had the edge in offense and power. Who would win a head-to-head matchup?

Just imagine the atmosphere.

The legendary Sugar Ray Leonard offers a wink and flashes that trademark megawatt smile. The super-skilled Floyd Mayweather Jr. throws $100 bills in every direction. Tens of thousands of fans explode as ring announcer Michael Buffer completes the introductions. A throng of assembled media has ventured to a swanky Las Vegas resort casino from all four corners of the earth – and that would just be the opening press conference.

Had it been possible for Leonard and Mayweather to share the prize ring during the peaks of their physical and boxing prowess, their showdown

would have been a global event and the hottest ticket on earth – an unmissable, all-American pay-per-view extravaganza between two champions who transcended the sport.

Leonard's incredible blend of speed, power and ferocity saw him reign supreme in an era bursting with all-time greats. Mayweather's almost psychic defense, stunning accuracy and uncanny ability to neutralize world-class opposition led to an immaculate 50-0 record.

Both champions captured world titles in five different divisions – Leonard from welterweight to light heavyweight, Mayweather from junior lightweight to junior middleweight. However, a hypothetical Leonard-Mayweather showdown would make most sense at the welterweight limit, where both fighters enjoyed enormous success. In 1981, Leonard became undisputed champion at that weight, and from 2006-2015, Mayweather annexed a variety of world title belts at 147 pounds to solidify his own dominance.

The ominous specter of nostalgia might sway some fans into believing that Mayweather is totally out of his depth here. But those who have been around him, fought against him and studied him believe otherwise. Leonard's greatness is beyond reproach, but so is Mayweather's, and this is a mythical matchup that ticks all the right boxes.

"With Floyd, I vividly remember turning to Top Rank president Todd Duboef and saying to him, 'This kid has a chance to be really special' at the end of Floyd's pro debut," recalled Top Rank matchmaker Bruce Trampler. "He struggled a couple fights later in Albuquerque and had a couple of other tough fights along the way, but all of his 27 fights for [Top Rank] were learning experiences that prepared him to be the best of his era.

"I had the greatest respect for Ray Leonard as a fighter when he came out of the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. My esteem only grew during his pro career, and to me he is the face of boxing over the last half century – a man of class, dignity, and integrity. I like great fighters who transcend several weight classes and prevail at each level, and Ray is one of the best ever."

The show-stealing Leonard made his bones by defeating Hall of Fame champions Wilfredo Benitez, Roberto Duran, Thomas Hearns and Marvelous Marvin Hagler. His remarkable skillset and grace were juxtaposed alongside a fierce killer instinct and desperate thirst for victory. Leonard thrived under pressure and there was no challenge too big.

By the time he faced the significantly larger Donny Lalonde in November 1988, "The Sugar Man" was a three-

Even when Leonard (pictured here against Donny Lalonde) was past his prime and competing in heavier weight classes, he still exhibited a fierce killer instinct after hurting his opponent.

weight world champion and a living legend. Lalonde held the WBC light heavyweight title, and savvy negotiating by the Leonard camp led to that organization's newly formed super middleweight belt being on the line in the very same contest. Lalonde agreed to drop down to the 168-pound limit, and the Canadian power-puncher recalls being surprised by more than just the smaller man's immense talent on fight night.

"I have to say that everything was better than I expected," said Lalonde, who scored a fourth-round knockdown before being stopped by a savage attack in the ninth. "It wasn't that I underestimated Ray's skills; what I underestimated was the parts you can't measure: balls, heart, intestinal fortitude, mental toughness.

"Ray has acknowledged that he was hurt many times in our fight, but you didn't really see it. He was brilliant at masking being hurt and he never, not even for a split-second, had any quit in him. When Ray was hurt, he was almost untouchable. What we do every day, 10,000 times or more in repetition, is what we will do in our unconscious mind if our bodies are cut off. I found that Ray's survival instincts were even better when he wasn't thinking. I soon realized I had to knock him out with one shot, because I looked like a fool trying to hit him when he was hurt."

Opponents of the almost invisible Mayweather can relate to that predicament. According to CompuBox, the former pound-for-pound king is the most efficient fistfighter in modern boxing history. Heading into his WBA junior middleweight title bout with Miguel Cotto in May 2012, Mayweather had averaged a 46 percent connect ratio while his opposition had landed only 16 percent of their total punches against him. That is an incredible statistic.

When the super popular Ricky Hatton brought 30,000 British fans to Las Vegas for a money-spinning showdown in December 2007, he was unbeaten in 43 fights with 31 knockouts. A terrific pressure-fighter, Hatton had ended the reign of longtime junior welterweight champion Kostya Tszyu with a savage

Mayweather's absolute mastery of distance, tempo and timing was on display against Ricky Hatton, 43-0 at the time, during their 2007 welterweight showdown.

and relentless attack, unified two titles against Carlos Maussa and won the WBA welterweight crown from Luis Collazo. However, "The Hitman" found it almost impossible to do any significant hitting against Mayweather, 38-0 at the time.

"Mayweather's defense was exceptional," acknowledged Hatton, who was stopped in 10 rounds. "It was a unique style with the left hand low, the roll of the shoulder, and he was able to catch shots or make punches glance off him. Even when a shot did land, it rarely landed cleanly; he either got a half glove on it, or a half roll (of the shoulder). His defense was brilliant, and that's why he was able to carry on until he was 40 years of age.

"If you threw the left hook, he caught it with the right glove. If you threw a

right cross, he would deflect it with his shoulder. If you threw the left hook to the body, he would get his elbow in. Also, because his left hand was so low, it covered the midriff. The punch that worked against him was the jab and, truth be known, I wish I'd thrown a few more jabs. Land the jab, knock his head back and then go in with the hooks."

Stephen "Breadman" Edwards is trainer of junior middleweight contender Julian Williams and a boxing historian. His knowledge of the sport is beyond question and his appreciation of both Leonard and Mayweather is visceral.

"Mayweather is a fighter I truly believe to be a boxing savant," Edwards said. "He may not be able to explain with words why he does certain things, but we rarely see him make the wrong decision in a fight. That's impressive. It's hard to accurately assess the mental depth he possesses, because he seems to be able to rise as high as he needs to. His slippery defense, high IQ and all-time great stamina would trouble Ray Leonard and any other welterweight who ever lived.

"Leonard had similar IQ to Mayweather, but I believe Leonard makes more mistakes. Mayweather is the neater fighter, but Leonard's athleticism may be higher than Mayweather's. Both are lightning-fast, but Mayweather is fast for one or two shots, whereas Leonard is fast for six or seven. In terms of stamina, Mayweather is a true deep-water fighter – he's always better late in fights – but Leonard was a 15-round juggernaut."

So who wins?

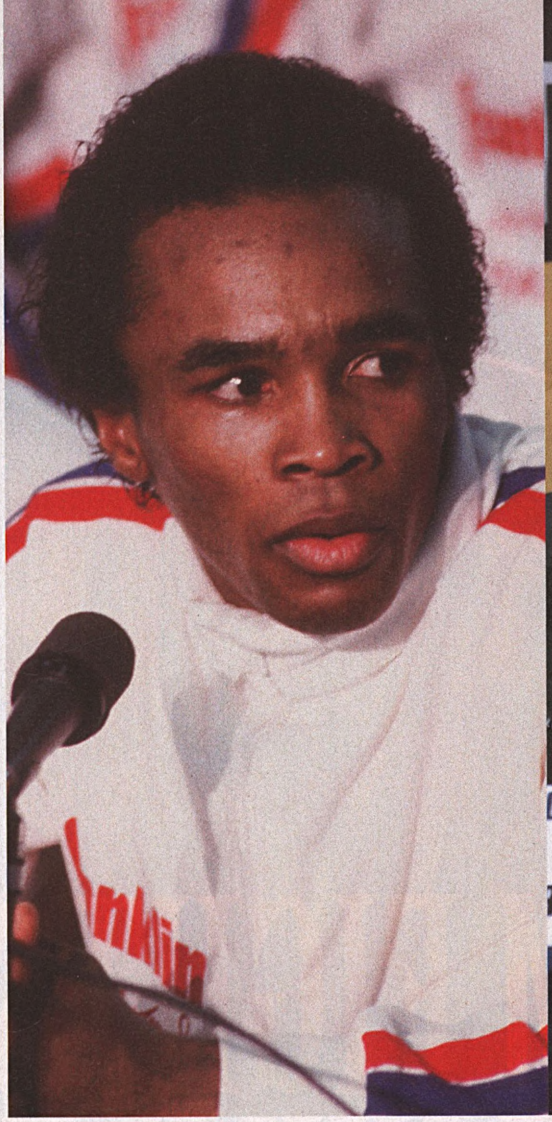
Lalonde studied Leonard diligently during his preparation. The former light heavyweight titleholder also knows firsthand just how effective the great champion was in the heat of a tough and competitive battle. Mayweather's defensive prowess and accuracy impressed Lalonde, but he only sees one winner if the pair were to have collided in their respective primes.

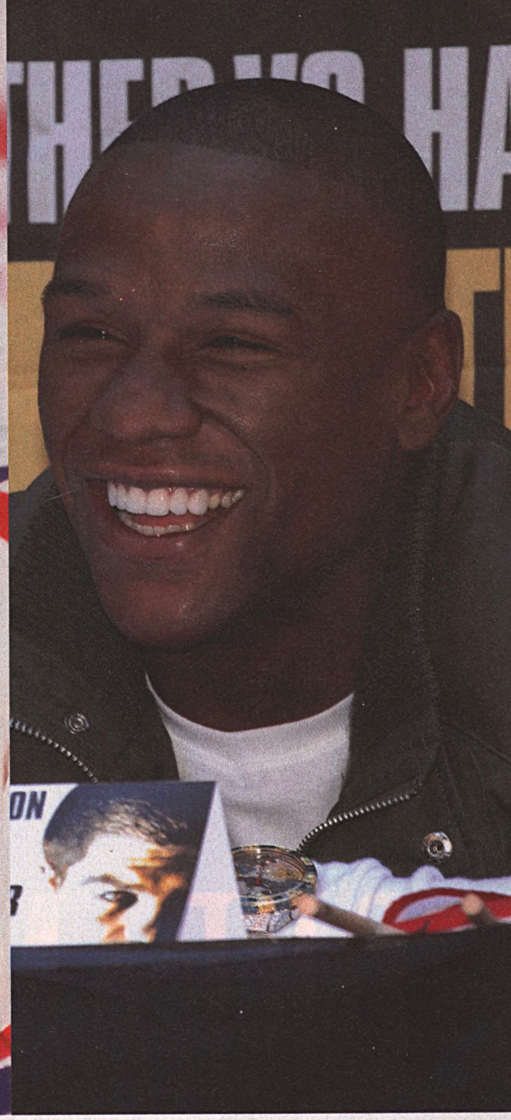
"Mayweather certainly goes down as one of the greatest boxers of all time, but I would pick Leonard," said Lalonde without hesitation. "Ray hit more effectively and his shots had more impact. Mayweather was effective in terms of scoring but he really didn't do a lot of damage. He didn't even seem to intend to do damage. Ray wanted to hurt you every time he hit you, and punching power would be the difference.

"Floyd had great defense, but he never fought anyone with the offense of a Ray Leonard. He fought a lot of great fighters and I give him that, but Ray was a very special and unique talent. He had the ability to punch up and down, down and up, in-between your punches; he could punch anywhere he wanted to."

Hatton was obsessed with fighting Mayweather years before the showdown became a reality. Despite falling short, the Manchester native gave a good account of himself against the finest pound-for-

Mayweather and Leonard have met at various award ceremonies over the years. Mayweather is usually respectful, but not always.





pound fighter of his generation. Mayweather turned in an excellent performance, mixing smart boxing with cerebral inside fighting to eventually wear his man down. However, despite acknowledging his former rival's quality, the former two-weight titleholder also believes – with some trepidation – that Leonard would prevail.

"Sugar Ray Leonard was incredibly versatile," said Hatton. "Mayweather was a clever boxer, but look at what Leonard did with Duran in the rematch, or what he did with Hagler when everyone picked against him. He was very intelligent and I think he would sort out the Mayweather puzzle. Also, and we touched on it earlier, the punch that worked against Mayweather was the jab, and no one had a better jab than Sugar Ray Leonard.

"But Mayweather belongs in that class, and even though I pick Leonard to win, if the decision went Floyd's way, I wouldn't be surprised – that's how good he is. I couldn't make a prediction with a massive amount of confidence, but if you ask me where my last pound is gonna go – I'm picking Sugar Ray Leonard."

Trampler, like Hatton, also gave "the edge" to Leonard but was quick to point out that Mayweather more than belongs in the argument.

Edwards, who frequently engages in hypothetical matchup discussions on social media, went into meticulous detail on how he feels the matchup would have unfolded, and his vision is of a close tactical bout that would eventually ignite and provide the type of ebb and flow that fans enjoyed in 1980s superfights.

"Both guys have laser-like reflexes and eyes, so the early rounds would be a chess match," said Edwards. "Both have great, underrated jabs, and although Mayweather doesn't have Leonard's volume, he makes up for it with accuracy. I can envision Mayweather catching Leonard with strong, clean counterpunches early, and at that point Leonard would start attacking. Leonard was just as good a fighter as he was a boxer, and this is his biggest advantage.

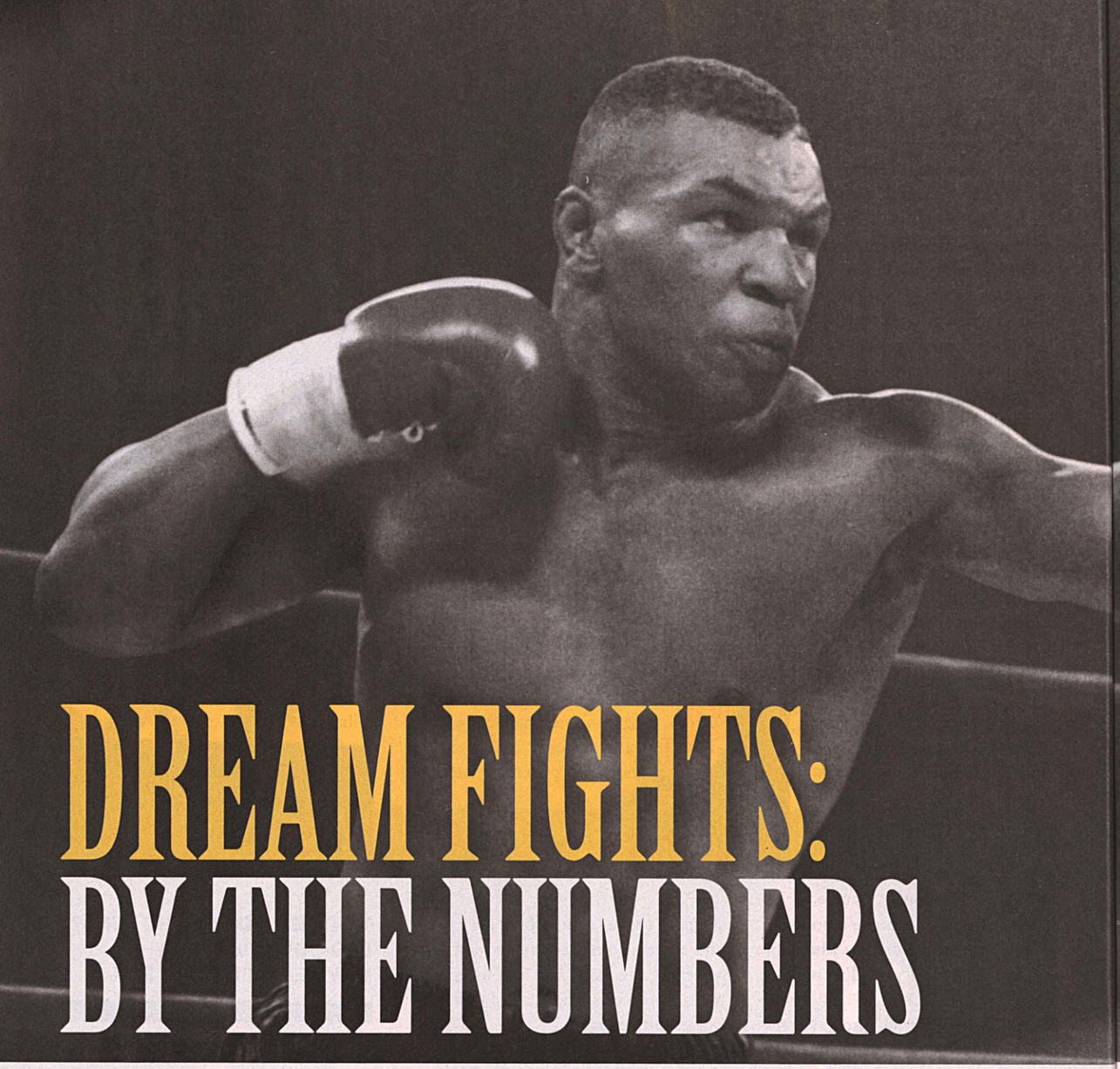
"I believe Mayweather would be right with him step-for-step, but at some point Leonard, who had the unique ability to punch while his opponent was punching, would clip Mayweather and hurt him. At that point, he would look as if he was more in control. I think Mayweather's IQ and reflexes would keep him from getting stopped, but I think Leonard's frenetic second-half aggression would edge a tough but clear decision."

Would Leonard agree with the above opinions? Yes. Would Mayweather agree? Hell no. The fighter known as "Money" is on record as saying he believes himself to be better than Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Robinson. That caused outrage among hardcore fight fans, but Mayweather, an exceptionally gifted and decorated prizefighter, is entitled to his opinion. In terms of technical knowledge, how many people know more about boxing than he does?

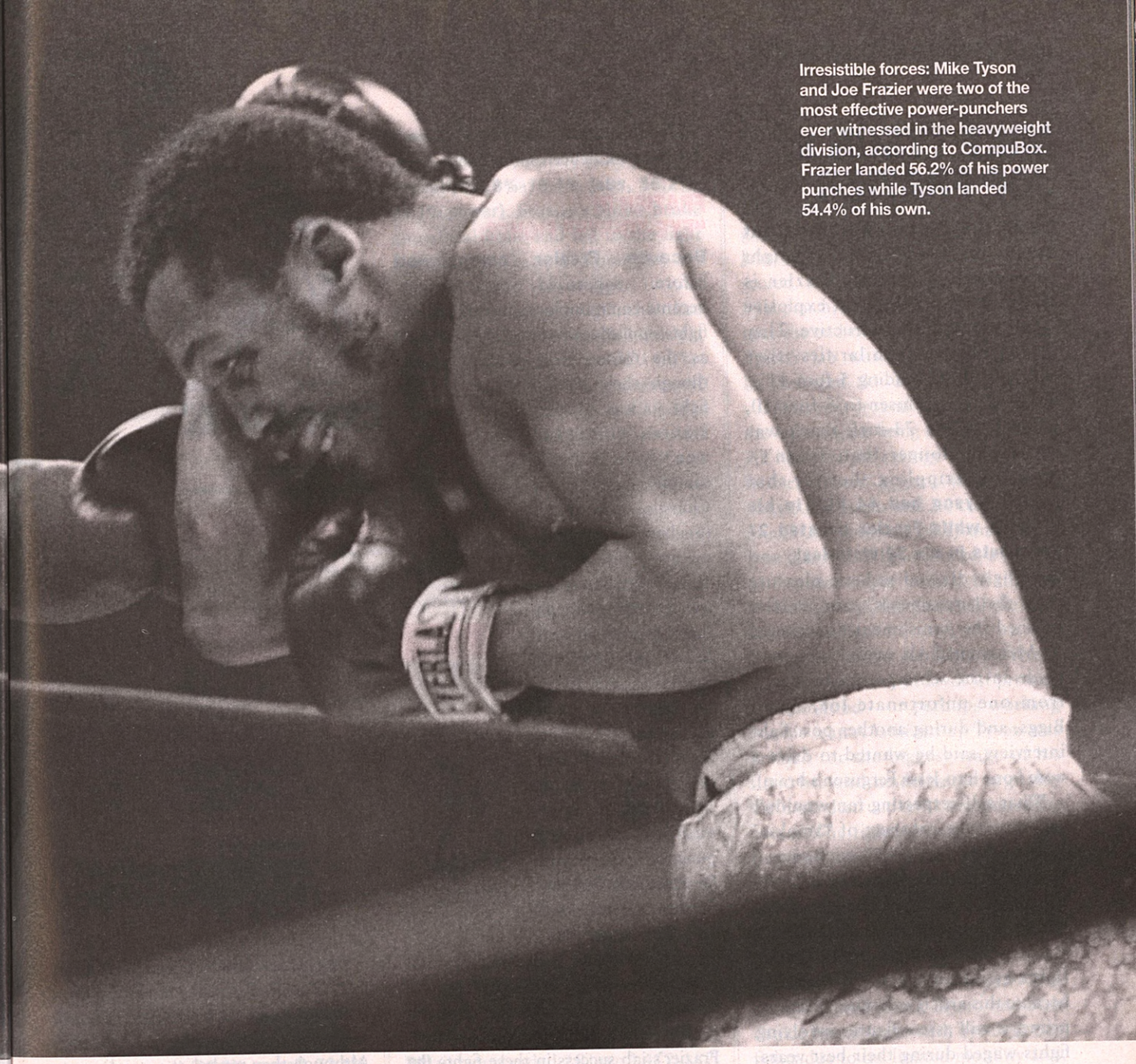
TWITTER POLL: WHO WINS?
LEONARD (1981) 68% ★
MAYWEATHER (2007) 32%

Mythical matchups and pound-for-pound arguments are almost as old as the fight game itself. Would Mike Tyson have beaten Ali? Would Gennady Golovkin have overcome Hagler? Would Pernell Whitaker have survived Duran? New fighters will continue to enter the dream match tournament for as long as boxing lasts.

On this occasion, the fight of fantasy has gone the distance ... and Sugar Ray Leonard has prevailed by a unanimous decision.



DREAM FIGHTS: BY THE NUMBERS



Irresistible forces: Mike Tyson and Joe Frazier were two of the most effective power-punchers ever witnessed in the heavyweight division, according to CompuBox. Frazier landed 56.2% of his power punches while Tyson landed 54.4% of his own.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE FIERCEST HEAVYWEIGHTS AND THE MOST TALENTED WELTERWEIGHTS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE ERAS CLASHED? HISTORIC COMPUBOX STATS HELP US IMAGINE THE OUTCOMES OF THESE MYTHICAL MATCHUPS

By **Lee Groves**

Part of the fun of being a boxing fan is debating how the greats of the past eras would have fared against each other, as well as how they would have performed against the best of today. Countless words have been spoken about the subject, and more than a few publications (including this one) have dedicated innumerable pages to it because of the endless possibilities.

In previous years, in the absence of hard numbers to compare and contrast athletic performances as was the case in all the other major sports, boxing pundits relied heavily on their own observations and areas of expertise to form their opinions regarding who would win a particular fantasy match. Because of this, personal biases often crept into their final judgments. For example, RING founder Nat Fleischer, who was born in 1887, tended to rate the greats of the early 20th century far higher on his all-time lists than most of his more contemporary colleagues. Younger fans of today tend to elevate those who were great during their own formative years while ignoring the deeds of fighters who retired decades before their births. Such are the results of human nature.

Starting here, however, a new source of information will be inserted into the conversation: punch stats. The arrival of CompuBox in 1985 revolutionized the way fights are viewed while also providing a baseline for debate regarding controversial decisions. Because the final numbers often confirmed conventional wisdom, CompuBox has become the industry standard for boxing-related statistics – controversy or not. As a result, a variety of TV networks use CompuBox not only to compile live stats but also to assemble pre-fight analyses that spot trends that may affect the outcome. A study I conducted a few years ago determined that, during a 10-year period, CompuBox correctly predicted the outcome of fights airing on their client networks 80.9% of the time.

In recent years, however, CompuBox expanded the scope of its research by compiling data for fighters whose careers predated the company's existence. Because boxing's basic assortment of punches has not changed in more than a century, one can make direct statistical comparisons from era to era in terms of output and accuracy. One caveat: To do so, there must be enough complete footage available to assemble a comprehensive profile.

While CompuBox can't measure the force of a punch, it can assess a fighter's offensive prowess, as well as his defensive skill, based on the connect percentages in the program's three major categories – total punches, jabs and power punches (defined as anything other than a jab). Because human beings in general – and fighters in particular – are creatures of habit, one can use the numbers accumulated over a period of time to make an educated guess as to how they will fare against certain opponents who use a particular style.

For the first time inside the pages of THE RING, CompuBox data will be used to assess how some of history's juiciest fantasy fights might have unfolded. While the information presented here isn't intended to be the final word, it certainly will offer additional food for thought. »

MIKE TYSON vs. JOE FRAZIER

Of all the dream matches that can be made among heavyweight champions, Tyson vs. Frazier is arguably among the most explosive – and potentially destructive. They shared physical similarities (they were billed as standing 5-foot-11½, but both were closer to 5-foot-10, while Frazier's 73-inch reach was two inches longer than Tyson's), possessed crippling shot-for-shot power **(Tyson had 44 KOs in his 50 wins while Frazier boasted 27 knockouts in his 32 victories)**, and seemingly derived sadistic pleasure from their opponents' pain (Frazier relished the punishment he inflicted on Muhammad Ali, while Tyson took pride in the whimpering he heard from one unfortunate foe, Tyrell Biggs, and during another post-fight interview said he wanted to drive a nose bone into Jesse Ferguson's brain).

What self-respecting fan wouldn't salivate at the prospect of "Smokin' Joe" and "Iron Mike" exchanging bombs from bell to bell? The only question is how many bells those fans would get to hear.

CompuBox has data for 18 Frazier fights as well as 26 of Tyson's, but because this article examines prime vs. prime, it will assess figures involving fights waged during their best years. For Frazier, the informational pool will be his 11 CompuBox-tracked fights between July 1967 (George Chuvalo, his last prominent pre-title foe) and January 1973 (George Foreman, his first defeat despite being a betting favorite). (Two of Frazier's fights during this period, his third-round KO of Marion Connor and second-round stoppage of Tony Doyle, were not counted because no complete footage of those bouts is available.) Tyson's stats will be drawn from his 15 fights between November 1986 (Trevor Berbick, his first major title victory) and June 1991 (the Donovan "Razor" Ruddock rematch, his last pre-prison fight).

The following are several factors that may influence the outcome.

FRAZIER IN "EYE-TO-EYE" FIGHTS:

Because Frazier campaigned before supersized heavyweights became commonplace, he was able to fight similarly sized aggressors, such as the 6-foot Jerry Quarry (twice; though their second fight was after Frazier's "prime" and won't be used in this sample), the 6-foot Chuvalo (one of the toughest fighters ever to live), the 5-foot-10½ Oscar Bonavena (twice, though their first fight was before the "prime" boundary and won't be used here) and the 5-foot-11 Ron Stander. Frazier was at his beastly best in these fights; despite throwing fewer punches per round **(a combined 61.9 for Frazier versus 70.9 for the opponents)**, Frazier landed 14.8 more total punches per round **(32.3 vs. 17.5)** and connected with stunning precision **(52.2% overall, 33.6% jabs, 57% power).** Frazier's jab success in these fights **(he landed 4.2 of his 12.5 jabs per round)** is striking given that his jab is overlooked when assessing his greatness. Also, his defensive numbers are much better than one might think, as he was hit by 24.7% of his foes' overall punches, **8% of their jabs and 33.7% of their power shots, all below the respective division norms of 33.8%, 25.4% and 40.9%).** That's because the overarching image of Frazier is shaped by his fights against Ali and Foreman, the only two men to have beaten him. While "Big George" bludgeoned Frazier and Ali stabbed his eyes shut with his stiletto jabs and pinpoint crosses, Frazier's bob-and-weave fared much better against everyone else.

COMPUBOX
EVERY PUNCH COUNTS ■ EST. 1985

COMPARISON REPORT

JOE FRAZIER- 11 fights (Chuvalo thru Foreman I)

TOTAL PUNCHES			
FRAZIER	CATEGORY	11 OPPONENTS	HEAVYWEIGHT AVG.
53.6	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	61	44.7
27.4	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	16.9	15.1
51.1%	PERCENTAGE	27.7%	33.8%
39.9% (10)	BODY LANDED RATIO	37.9% (10)	31.5% (OVERALL)

JAB			
FRAZIER	CATEGORY	11 OPPONENTS	HEAVYWEIGHT AVG.
9.8	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	25	20.5
2.8	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	4	5.2
28.6%	PERCENTAGE	16%	25.4%

POWER			
FRAZIER	CATEGORY	11 OPPONENTS	HEAVYWEIGHT AVG.
43.8	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	36	24.2
24.6	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	12.9	9.9
56.2%	PERCENTAGE	35.8%	40.9%

REPORT NOTES

Frazier amassed a +23.4 plus/minus rating. Frazier landed a whopping 51.1% of his total punches, 17.3% higher than the heavyweight avg. He landed 56.2% of his power punches, 15.3% higher than the heavy. avg. His 24.6 power punches landed per round more than doubled the heavy. avg. 39.9% of Joe's landed punches were body shots (CompuBox avg. 22.2%). Joe was all about the power punch, as 24.6 of his 27.4 landed punches (89.8%) power shots. His defense was better than avg., as opponents landed 27.7% of their total punches and 35.8% of their power shots.

The first Quarry fight – THE RING's 1969 Fight of the Year – perfectly illustrated the folly of swapping punches with a peak Frazier. Although they traded at a nearly even rate **(65 total punch attempts per round for Frazier, 64.6 for Quarry)**, it was Frazier's shift into overdrive starting in Round 3 that left Quarry choking on his opponent's dust and, eventually, on his own blood. In Rounds 3 through 7, Frazier outlanded Quarry 213-94 overall and 169-86 power, with the gaps most frightening in Rounds 6 and 7 **(93-26 overall, 74-24 power).** Even worse for Quarry: He injured his right hand during the fight and sustained a horribly cut cheek. But, Quarry being Quarry, he fought on – to his peril. Frazier averaged a mind-boggling 40.4 connects per round **(nearly triple the 15.1 heavyweight average)** in the 1969 fight, and while Frazier absorbed a high percentage of Quarry's blows **(37.8% overall, 13% jabs, 43.8% power),** he compensated by landing virtually at will **(62.2% overall, 53.4% jabs, 64.4% power).** Frazier's vaunted body attack was in full force as it accounted for 104 of his 234 power connects **(44.4%, which is in line with his 10-fight average of 39.9%)**, while Quarry was a more-than-respectable 85 of 160 (53.1%). Even Frazier's jab was landing with authority as he averaged seven connects per round. The final numbers perfectly illustrated the pain and chaos inflicted over seven rounds: 283-171 overall, 49-11 jabs and 234-160 power.

Chuvalo attempted more punches overall than Frazier **(92.6 per round to Frazier's 82.5)** but Frazier's rolling guard and sticky punches contributed to him landing more often **(137-85 overall, 14-12 jabs, 123-73 power)** and much more accurately **(53.7%-29.7% overall, 38.9%-15.4% jabs, 56.2%-35.1% power).** Frazier's blows broke an orbital bone and led to the fight being stopped early in Round 4.

Stander, who was stopped in four rounds, also threw more punches than Frazier **(79 to 61 per round)**, but it did him no good as Frazier led 54.6%-25.9% in overall connects and 59.3%-30.1% power, as well as 133-82 overall and 109-82 power. Worse yet, Stander failed to land any of his 44 jabs while Frazier went an impressive 24 of 60 **(40%)**.

As for Bonavena, he couldn't duplicate the success he'd enjoyed against a pre-prime Frazier in 1966. In that bout, Bonavena scored two first-round knockdowns en route to a split decision loss over 10 rounds. When they met again in December 1968 for Frazier's New York State Athletic Commission heavyweight title, Frazier was utterly dominant. In winning a lopsided 15-round decision, Frazier outlanded "Ringo" 417-187 overall and 378-151 power while also creating yawning accuracy gaps of 46.2%-17.4% overall, 20.7%-6.7% jabs and 52.9%-28.3% power. Also, Frazier led 176-58 in total body connects.

The moral of the story: If you're a short fighter who goes for it, you're in trouble against Frazier.

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COMPARISON REPORT

MIKE TYSON- 15 fights (Berbick thru Ruddock II)

TOTAL PUNCHES			
TYSON	CATEGORY	15 OPPONENTS	WEIGHTCLASS AVG.
34	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	30.5	55.5
15.6	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	10.4	16.8
45.9%	PERCENTAGE	34.1%	30.3%
29.8% (4)	BODY LANDED RATIO	20% (4)	31.5% (OVERALL)

JAB			
TYSON	CATEGORY	15 OPPONENTS	WEIGHTCLASS AVG.
11.1	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	14.6	23.1
3.2	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	4.1	4.7
28.8%	PERCENTAGE	28.1%	20.3%

POWER			
TYSON	CATEGORY	15 OPPONENTS	WEIGHTCLASS AVG.
22.8	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	15.9	32.5
12.4	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	6.3	12.1
54.4%	PERCENTAGE	39.6%	37.2%

REPORT NOTES

Tyson amassed a +11.8 plus/minus rating. Tyson made his punches count, throwing 21.5 fewer than the heavy. avg., but landing 45.9% and 15.6 per round. Tyson landed 54.4% of his power shots, 17.2% higher than the heavy. avg. Opponents landed 39.6% of their power punches, but only 6.3 per round- half the heavy. avg. 29.8% of Tyson's landed punches were to the body of his opponents.

TYSON VS. AGGRESSORS:

Unlike Frazier, most of Tyson's better opponents were taller than he was, but some were brave enough (or foolish enough) to trade with him – or at least not run away from him. Trevor Berbick tried his best to keep his WBC belt but Tyson, who said he was punching with "murderous intentions," was a force of nature as he outlanded Berbick 77-16 overall **(31-4 jabs and 46-12 power)**, recorded massive accuracy gaps **(56.2%-37.2% overall, 44.3%-23.5% jabs, 68.7%-46.2% power)** and famously scored three knockdowns with his final punch, a short hook to the temple near the end of Round 2. Like Frazier, Tyson's jab was immensely effective; he averaged 35 attempts and 15.5 connects per round against Berbick, the latter figure being nearly triple the 5.2 heavyweight average while limiting Berbick (never a great jabber) to a puny 8.5 attempts and 2.0 connects per round. A byproduct of Tyson's attack was that while he averaged a robust 68.5 punches per round, he limited Berbick to 21.5, less than half the 44.7 division norm.

Michael Spinks foolishly eschewed his tricky mobility in favor of proving his manhood – or perhaps working out his fear. A lathered-up Tyson was primed for the biggest stage of his fistic life and he delivered arguably the most destructive 91 seconds of his career. The fight's brevity produced tiny raw numbers **(8-2 in terms of overall connects and in landed power shots – both men threw one jab that missed)**, but the carnage was unforgettable.

The fantastically sculpted but muscle-bound Frank Bruno had little choice but to trade with Tyson in two fights due to his limited mobility and, as a result, he absorbed the full force of Tyson's talents. Bruno managed to briefly stun and outland Tyson 14-13 overall and 13-12 power in Round 1 of the first fight (the only one included in this statistical study), but from then on, Tyson asserted his superiority. In Rounds 3-5, he led 62-15 overall and 55-14 power, and for the fight **(which ended at 2:55 of the fifth)** he prevailed 89-37 overall and 81-33 power, landing 44.1% overall and 50.3% power to Bruno's 21.8% and 32.4% respectively. Like the Spinks fight (and unlike the Berbick bout), the jab was a non-entity as Tyson went 8 of 41 **(19.5%)** against Bruno.

Given these numbers, is it any

wonder why the rest of Tyson's opponents tried to keep him at arm's length? Many ultimately failed in their quest, but James "Buster" Douglas found the right balance between science and aggression against an admittedly unfocused and ill-conditioned Tyson. Averaging 46.6 punches per round (including an extraordinary 13.5 landed jabs per round), Douglas limited Tyson to 22.6 punches per round while also shredding his defense, landing 52.2% overall, 52.7% jabs and 51.5% power. Despite his depleted state, Tyson still managed to land 47.2% overall, 30.3% jabs and 56.5% power, but the activity gap resulted in Douglas' leads of 230-101 connects overall, 128-23 jabs and 102-78 power. Douglas' success wouldn't help Frazier much against Tyson, though, because he sported a completely different physique as well as a diametrically opposed style.

Following the image-shattering loss to Douglas, some fighters – particularly Donovan "Razor" Ruddock – opted to rumble with Tyson. While Ruddock repeatedly landed his patented "Smash" (the name for his devastating left uppercut-hook hybrid punch), Tyson was the better fighter in both contests. In fight one, Tyson led the aggressive Ruddock 125-68 overall, 19-6 jabs and 106-62 power as well as 45.9%-39% overall, 26%-14.3% jabs and 52.8%-47.1% power. In the rematch, however, Ruddock fought more on the retreat thanks to a knockdown (and a broken jaw) in Round 2, followed by another in Round 4. Despite the low output by both **(38.1 total punch attempts per round for Tyson, 28.8 for Ruddock),** the punishment dished out was plentiful **(190-116 overall and 178-95 power shots landed, percentage gaps favoring Tyson of 41.6%-33.6% overall and 52.8%-43.6% power).**

POINTS OF SEPARATION:

When one compares the prime performances of Tyson and Frazier, Frazier wins most of the statistical arguments. He was the more active combatant **(53.6 punches per round to Tyson's 34)** whose punch distribution was more destructive **(81.7% of Frazier's total punch attempts and 89.8% of his overall connects were power shots to Tyson's 67.1% and 79.5% respectively).** Also, Frazier was more accurate overall **(51.1% to 45.9%),** attempted and connected with more power punches per round **(43.8 attempts and 24.6 connects per round to Tyson's 22.8 attempts and 12.4 connects per round)** and was the more precise power-hitter **(56.2% vs. 54.4% landed)**. Somewhat surprisingly, given their reputations, Frazier was also the harder fighter to hit, as his prime opponents landed 27.7% overall, 16% jabs and 35.8% power while Tyson's foes connected on 34.1% overall, 28.1% jabs and 39.6% power. It can be argued that Tyson's opponents from top to bottom were better than Frazier's, which may skew the numbers. In fact, the only statistical argument Tyson wins is in jabs **(11.1 attempts and 3.2 connects per round to Frazier's 9.8 attempts and 2.8 connects per round),** but even then, Frazier trails Tyson by just 0.2%.

Tyson vs. Frazier would be a "monumental fistic extravaganza," as promoter Don King would probably say.

A major difference favoring "Iron Mike" was his iron chin. Expanding this examination to the entirety of their careers, Frazier was dropped twice by Bonavena in their first fight in 1966, eight times by Foreman in their two fights and stunned by the relatively light-hitting Muhammad Ali in two of their three bouts (though not in fight one, when both were closest to their respective primes). Meanwhile, Tyson's first knockdown – in his 38th fight – was the result of a neck-wrenching uppercut from Douglas, and while he was briefly buzzed by Tony Tucker and Bruno (first fight) in Round 1, he quickly shook off the blows and proceeded to dominate. It wasn't until later in his career that Tyson's chin betrayed him as Evander Holyfield (twice), Lennox Lewis, Danny Williams and Kevin McBride felled the fading great.

An even bigger – and perhaps pivotal – difference is that Frazier was a notoriously slow starter while Tyson was blowtorch hot from the start. At the same time, however, once Frazier warmed to his task, he was difficult to dislodge. Tyson, once the flame waned, was more vulnerable.

PREDICTION:

We know the prime Frazier and Tyson can dish it out, but, by and large, Tyson at his best had a cast-iron jaw that stood up to the most powerful of fists. He also owned quicker hands, flashier head movement and better combination punching. Also, while Frazier had arguably history's greatest left hook, his right hand was ordinary by comparison. Conversely, not only was Tyson a genuine two-fisted puncher, he also could deliver his power from both the orthodox and southpaw stances. Finally, Tyson's emotional shortcomings, which often manifested themselves in bizarre ways, didn't surface until later in his career.

So, with all of these advantages in his pocket, Tyson should be an easy winner, right?

Not necessarily.

Here's why: While Frazier twice fell to Foreman, Foreman possessed a tremendous size advantage to go with his gargantuan punch. That, in addition to "Big George's" tremendous ability to rev his engine quickly, was far too much for the slow-starting Frazier to overcome. However, against bombers closer to his own size – like Quarry, Chuvalo and Bonavena – Frazier was able to overcome early storms, find his groove and come out the winner in each one of their five meetings. Although Tyson will carry more weight and will sport a chiseled physique, he's not the giant that Foreman was, so one can surmise that Frazier has a decent chance of shaking off Tyson's jet-fueled, Round 1 attack.

Should Frazier get past the first two or three rounds, the onus will shift to Tyson, who must prove that he can prevail in a hard, tough fight against someone who is offering robust resistance. While he scored an eighth-round knockdown against Douglas after being outboxed for most of the fight up to that point, he couldn't summon a second surge when Douglas regained his feet and resumed his attack. The proof: Douglas outlanded Tyson 52-14 overall and 32-14 power in the ninth and 10th rounds.

Tyson will be the one who will come out smokin', and he may even register an early knockdown, because Frazier may be shocked by the speed and force of "Iron Mike's" fists. But Frazier, fortified by his extraordinary toughness and his ferocious competitive drive, will shake off the early punishment and become what he has always been: boxing's ultimate heart monitor. As he acclimates to Tyson's quick and powerful combinations, Frazier will do a better job of avoiding the fire with his bob-and-weave tactics and then, after sufficiently warming up, will begin to unload his own thunder. Round after round, Frazier will methodically work over Tyson's ribs while mixing in a heavy dose of hooks to the jaw. Slowly but surely, the effects of Frazier's work will sap Tyson's gas tank – and perhaps his will to carry on – and once Frazier spots that "give" in Tyson, it will be game over. Frazier by 12th-round TKO.

LEONARD vs. MAYWEATHER

On September 9, 1978, at the Civic Center in Providence, R.I., Sugar Ray Leonard and Floyd Mayweather actually did fight. The catch: Leonard's opponent that day was the *father* of "Money" Mayweather. The elder Mayweather was a 25-year-old welterweight who came into the match with a 15-1 **(7 KOs)** record and an 11-fight winning streak that began by avenging his only loss to date against Tyrone Phelps (who stopped Mayweather in two rounds just two months earlier). Mayweather, who went 46-2 as an amateur and was a four-time Michigan Golden Gloves champion, used handspeed, footwork and better-than-average defense to compensate for punching power that was modest when compared to his peers. Those tools would be put to the ultimate test against Leonard, by far the best opponent he ever faced – and ever would face. (See the "Leonard Over Mayweather" article, a contemporary account of the fight from THE RING, on page 35.)

Leonard, of course, was the star of this show. It was a status he earned along with Olympic gold in 1976. His magnetism was such that he commanded a then-record $40,044 purse in his pro debut while his opponent, Luis Vega, made $650. At age 22, Leonard, 13-0 (8 KOs) entering the Mayweather fight, was poised to become the next face of boxing thanks to his brilliant blend of athleticism, ring intelligence, media savvy and precocious business sense, the latter two of which were refined by attorney/adviser Mike Trainer. Boxing needed a new face because the man who had held that title for nearly two decades – Muhammad Ali – was 36 and was nearing the end of a legendary ring life. He was just six days away from beating Leon Spinks to become the first man ever to win a piece of the heavyweight title three times, a victory fated to be his last. So, in a very real way, Leonard's timing outside the ring was as fortuitous as it was wondrous inside the ropes.

Mayweather, rated sixth by THE RING, did his best to take the fight to Leonard, but Leonard's blinding speed and pinpoint punches ripped holes through the guard. Leonard did this by first using body jabs to soften Mayweather's shell **(12 of his 16 body jab connects in the bout were scored in the first two rounds)**, then utilizing his lively legs to set up his 45-degree hooks to the jaw **(one of which staggered Mayweather late in Round 4)** as well as a multitude of body shots **(86, to be exact)**. Finally, Leonard made sure to launch sustained attacks in the final minute of each round when Mayweather was at his weariest. Through nine completed rounds, 53.6% of Leonard's total connects **(128 of 239)** and 58.2% of his landed power shots **(110 of 189)** were scored in the rounds' last 60 seconds.

Leonard recorded two knockdowns in Round 8 and nailed down the TKO win with just 44 seconds left in the scheduled 10-rounder. Leonard was more active **(66.9 punches per round to Mayweather's 44.8)**, jabbed much better **(23.3 attempts/5.3 connects per round to Mayweather's 24.3 and 2.7 respectively)**, landed more blows in every category **(260-80 overall punches, 51-26 jabs, 209-54 power punches)** and did so more accurately **(39.8%-18.3% overall, 22.5%-11% jabs, 49.1%-27% power).** Though ABC's Howard Cosell called Leonard's performance sub-par, the numbers say otherwise. Then again, considering the form Leonard showed in his previous 13 fights, Cosell might have had a case, because Leonard had been *that* good coming into the Mayweather bout.

"After I hit him with all those overhand rights, he was through," Leonard told the Associated Press, adding that he felt the fight should have been stopped in Round 6.

"I feel I could have done better with two hands," Mayweather said in the same AP story. "My right is my best hand. I tried to punch with it after the

first (round) but it was paining too bad."

By fighting Leonard, Mayweather was doing his part to feed a family, a family that included a namesake son. Floyd Joy Mayweather was a couple of weeks beyond 18 months old when his father fought Sugar Ray, but not long after that he began receiving a boxing education unlike any other. Not only did the younger Floyd receive teaching from his dad, he also learned from uncles Jeff and Roger, the latter of whom became a two-division world champion and was, with due respect given to Kobe Bryant, the sports world's *original* "Black Mamba." Like Leonard, Mayweather was an Olympian, and while he received a bronze, he may well have won gold in the 1996 games in Atlanta had it not been for a highly questionable decision loss to Bulgaria's Serafim Todorov in the semifinal.

To date, the Todorov loss remains Mayweather's last official defeat.

In terms of business acumen, Mayweather perfected the model put forth by Leonard and polished by Roy Jones Jr. (who, like Mayweather, was robbed of Olympic gold in 1988), so much so that he earned nine-figure checks in two of his final three fights – against Manny Pacquiao and MMA star Conor McGregor. While historians will dispute Mayweather's claim of being history's best pound-for-pound fighter, no one can argue that he is TBE in terms of self-marketing. That gift has made him the richest boxer ever to walk the earth, and in a sport that's also called "prizefighting," that's quite the feather in his cap.

He is also the best statistical fighter who has yet lived, at least in this respect: His career plus-minus rating of plus-23.8 is the highest ever recorded among fighters profiled by CompuBox, for, over his 50-fight career, he landed 45.7% of his total punches while tasting just 21.9% of his opponents'. But how would the best of Mayweather at 147 fare against a prime welterweight Leonard, whose smorgasbord of skills was nothing short of otherworldly?

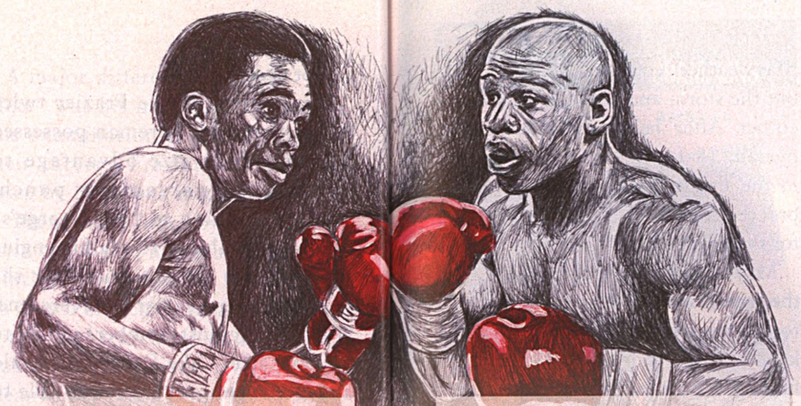
As is usually the case with Mayweather, making such an assessment is complicated. While Leonard's prime can be easily determined – his seven 147-pound fights spanning the period from November 1979 (when he won the WBC welterweight title from Wilfred Benitez) to February 1982 **(his final fight before eye issues forced a nearly 27-month retirement)** – Mayweather's isn't so easily defined.

Here's why: If one is to match them based on performances at welterweight that took place closest to their respective bests at the weight, Mayweather would face concerning deficits on two fronts. First, while Leonard's divisional prime spanned seven fights, Mayweather's first campaign at welterweight lasted just four (from Sharmba Mitchell in November 2005 to Ricky Hatton in December 2007, the final fight before he took a voluntary 21-month sabbatical). That's too small a sample from which to draw. Second, if one expands Mayweather's welterweight prime to seven fights to match Leonard's total – which would include his bouts with Juan Manuel Marquez, Shane Mosley and Victor Ortiz – then the age gap would be troublesome. While Leonard was between 23 and nearly 26 during his assigned prime, Mayweather was between 28 and 34 with several long breaks between fights.

One possible solution to address the chronology discrepancy is to consider fights from when Mayweather was closer to Leonard's age. Unfortunately, those fights took place at 130 – his 10-fight title run occurred between ages 21 and 24 – but it wouldn't be fair to Leonard to insert Mayweather's 130-pound self into a welterweight's body; this dream matchup is a 147-pound fight featuring two legends as their best 147-pound selves.

So how do we square the circle? First, the decision was made to equalize the fight sample to seven fights and to go with the somewhat older version of Mayweather. Several factors help mitigate the age gap: Mayweather's "hard work and dedication" training mode; his twice-a-year fighting schedule; the modern era's superior training, conditioning and nutritional methods; and, perhaps most importantly, Mayweather's freedom to minimize risk in terms of the opponents he chose to fight. All these factors left Mayweather very well preserved, and, better yet for him, he also would have the advantage of his additional years of pro experience as compared to Leonard's. Not only that, Mayweather also would benefit from the collective decades of boxing wisdom at his disposal.

Now that these issues have been addressed, let's start sizing up



PATRICK KILLIAN

COMPUBOX
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COMPARISON REPORT

LEONARD- 7 fights (Benitez thru Finch- no Kalule)

TOTAL PUNCHES			
LEONARD	CATEGORY	7 OPPONENTS	WELTERWEIGHT AVG.
46.1	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	48.8	57
20.1	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	15.3	17.5
43.6%	PERCENTAGE	31.4%	30.7%
N/A	BODY LANDED RATIO	N/A	N/A

JAB			
LEONARD	CATEGORY	7 OPPONENTS	WELTERWEIGHT AVG.
17.1	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	23.8	23.7
6	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	5.2	4.9
35.1%	PERCENTAGE	21.8%	20.7%

POWER			
LEONARD	CATEGORY	7 OPPONENTS	WELTERWEIGHT AVG.
29	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	25	33.4
14.1	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	10.1	12.6
48.6%	PERCENTAGE	40.4%	37.7%

REPORT NOTES

Leonard amassed a plus/minus rating of +12.2, not as high as one would expect. Reason? Opponents landed 40.4% of their power shots. The economical Leonard (46.1 punches thrown per round), landed 48.6% of his power punches against a who's who list of opponents that included Hearns, Duran twice and Benitez- all Hall of Famers.

COMPUBOX
EVERY PUNCH COUNTS! EST. 1985

COMPARISON REPORT

MAYWEATHER- 7 fights (Mitchell thru Ortiz- no delaHoya)

TOTAL PUNCHES			
MAYWEATHER	CATEGORY	7 OPPONENTS	WELTERWEIGHT AVG.
38.6	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	43.9	57
17.5	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	6.6	17.5
45.3%	PERCENTAGE	15%	30.7%
11% (2)	BODY LANDED RATIO	47.2% (2)	31.5% (OVERALL)

JAB			
MAYWEATHER	CATEGORY	7 OPPONENTS	WELTERWEIGHT AVG.
15.8	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	18	23.7
6.6	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	1.8	4.9
41.8%	PERCENTAGE	10%	20.7%

POWER			
MAYWEATHER	CATEGORY	7 OPPONENTS	WELTERWEIGHT AVG.
22.9	AVERAGE THROWN/RD	25.9	33.4
10.9	AVERAGE LANDED/RD	4.8	12.6
47.6%	PERCENTAGE	18.5%	37.7%

REPORT NOTES

Mayweather amassed a record setting +30.3 plus/minus rating. Opponents landed just 15% of their total punches- half the welterweight avg., while the economical Floyd (38.6 punches thrown per round) landed nearly 15% higher than the welter. avg. Mayweather opponents landed nearly 60% fewer total punches than the welter avg. and just 4.8 power shots per round (18.5%), while Floyd landed 47.6% of his power shots.

Leonard vs. Mayweather, Act Two. Will Mayweather gain revenge on his father's behalf, or will Leonard duplicate Jersey Joe Walcott's feat of beating father and son **(KO 3 Phil Johnson in June 1936, KO 3 Harold Johnson in February 1950)**?

LEONARD VS. SCIENCE:

Surprisingly, the raw numbers Leonard generated during his welterweight prime aren't overwhelming. First, Leonard threw fewer punches per round **(46.1 vs. 48.8 for his opponents)**. Second, he didn't dominate in terms of connects per rounds in any category **(20.1 vs. 15.3 overall, 6.0 vs. 5.2 jabs, 14.1 vs. 10.1 power)**. Finally, while Leonard's own accuracy was spectacular **(43.6% overall, 35.1% jabs, 48.6% power)**, he tasted an uncomfortably high percentage of his opponent's blows. In fact, his rivals' success rates of 31.4% overall, 21.8% jabs and 40.4% power are all above the welterweight averages of 30.7%, 20.7% and 37.7% respectively.

These numbers are excusable for one overwhelming reason: Leonard's quality of opposition during this stage. Wilfred Benitez, just a few months past 21, was a fistic prodigy who, at the time he fought Leonard, was considered the sport's best defensive wizard and among its most able counterpunchers. Roberto Duran, arguably the greatest lightweight in history, was 71-1 **(57 KOs)** coming into the first Leonard match, and while "Hands of Stone" produced the best performance of his career in Montreal, Leonard still came within one, one and two points of retaining his belt and snapping Duran's career-long 41-fight winning streak. Five months later, Leonard not only turned the tables by regaining his belt by eighth-round TKO, he forced boxing's supreme macho man to throw up his hands and quit. Then, less than three months after dethroning WBA junior middleweight titlist Ayub Kalule (which wasn't part of this statistical study), Leonard returned to 147 to meet WBA counterpart Thomas Hearns, the lanky and lethal power hitter from Detroit who could out-box the boxers and out-punch the punchers thanks to the knowledge imparted by trainer Emanuel Steward, who taught Hearns how to generate the maximum leverage from his 6-foot-1 frame and 78-inch reach. The proof: Coming into the Leonard unification match, Hearns' record was 32-0 **(30 KOs)**.

Even the lesser-known fighters from this period were talented; they just weren't on Leonard's level. Dave "Boy" Green was 33-2 **(26 KOs)** at the time he challenged Leonard, and nearly three years earlier he had given then-WBC welterweight king Carlos Palomino everything he wanted – and more – before "King Carlos" scored a come-from-way-behind 11th-round KO. Just as Palomino had done, Leonard retained his title with a spectacular highlight-reel knockout – and he did it in Round 4. Larry Bonds, whose No. 6 WBC ranking was widely doubted, got the shot because those rated above him – including Benitez, Pipino Cuevas and Randy Shields – reportedly turned down a fight with Leonard. In any case, the slick southpaw was 29-3 **(9 KOs)**, had won seven straight and, during the fight, his herky-jerky rhythm disrupted Leonard's timing. Unfortunately for Bonds, his ring craft only delayed the inevitable, as Leonard eventually scored a 10th-round TKO. Finally, the 28-3-1 **(19 KOs)** Bruce Finch was the reigning NABF (North American Boxing Federation) titleholder and had won 10 straight since being starched by Hearns.

Of Leonard's prime opponents, Benitez is the closest to Mayweather in terms of world-class talent with a defensive bent. Although Leonard was somewhat frustrated by Benitez's ability to slip under his right crosses, his ring IQ – further amplified by trainer Angelo Dundee – helped him decode the Puerto Rican's guard by assuming the role of thinking man's aggressor. The shift worked wonders as he scored a third-round knockdown and built a considerable lead on the scorecards by being first and by landing harder blows at every opportunity. In the championship rounds, Leonard upped his work rate considerably **(zooming from 32 punches in the 10th to 65 in the 11th and averaging 63 in the final five rounds)** and outlanded Benitez 146-91 overall and 123-69 power during that stretch.

With Leonard leading on all scorecards entering the 15th **(137-130, 137-133, 136-134)**, the challenger upped the ante a final time and challenged Benitez to match him. He couldn't: Leonard went 49 of 101 overall and 48 of 93 in power shots while Benitez was 33 of 61 and 32 of

57 respectively. A hook to the temple sent Benitez down in sections, and though he arose, his glassy eyes and goofy grin persuaded referee Carlos Padilla to stop the contest with just six seconds remaining in the fight.

Leonard's late-fight strength also surfaced against Bonds and Hearns, both of whom opted to box with Leonard for long stretches. Leonard outlanded Bonds 65-19 overall and 55-9 power in the final two rounds, while his most celebrated comeback came against Hearns. Leonard achieved this on the heels of Hearns' own strong rebound; after enduring a hellish sixth and seventh, Hearns reverted to what Steward called "leg boxing" and proceeded to outland Sugar Ray 116-47 overall – including 91-27 in jabs – in Rounds 8-12. Told he was "blowing it" by Dundee, a desperate Leonard turned the fight by scoring a knockdown in the 13th and finishing the fight in the 14th, outlanding Hearns 69-18 overall and 61-4 in power shots during his two-round rally.

If a trend can be gleaned, it is this: Though Leonard was a strategist at heart, he was versatile enough to shift into beast mode when a fellow boxer presented a significant threat. And when Sugar Ray Leonard became the beast, woe be to his victim.

THE KING OF ECONOMY:

During his 130-pound title reign, Mayweather was willing to assume all necessary risks in terms of who he faced and how he went about breaking them down. Back then, he averaged more punches per round than his opponents (51.2 vs. 50.3) and threw many more power shots than jabs (32.3 vs. 18.9). His offensive accuracy was excellent (47.3% overall, 36.5% jabs, 53.6% power) while his defensive numbers, while better than average, weren't especially spectacular **(25.6% overall, 15.8% jabs, 30.1% power)**.

Once he rose to welterweight, however, Mayweather tightened his game considerably and became the ultimate proponent of low-risk, high-reward boxing. In his seven sampled welterweight fights, Mayweather's average output plummeted to 38.6 per round and he didn't care that his opponents threw a collective 43.9 punches per round back at him. That's because he became supremely efficient on offense **(45.3% overall, 41.8% jabs, 47.6% power)** while his defense became nearly impenetrable **(15% overall, 10% jabs, 18.5% power)**. The result: Despite throwing 12.1% fewer punches per round than his rivals, Mayweather more than doubled his opponents' overall connects per round **(17.5 vs. 6.6)** and landed power shots per round **(10.9 vs. 4.8)** while nearly *quadrupling* their landed jabs per round **(6.6 vs. 1.8)**. Here's the topper: Mayweather's plus-minus rating during this period was an astounding 30.3.

Mayweather's 17.5 total connects per round is identical to the welterweight average, but he achieved it while throwing 32.2% fewer punches per round **(38.6 vs. 57)**. His 6.6 landed jabs per round is far above the 4.9 division norm and his 10.9 landed power shots per round is slightly below the 12.6 division average, but the fact he averaged 31.4% fewer attempts per round when compared to the average **(22.9 vs. 33.4)** is extraordinary.

Against Leonard, Mayweather will face two-inch deficits in height and reach. In his seven sampled welterweight fights, the 5-foot-8 Mayweather faced taller opponents only twice **(the 5-foot-9 Victor Ortiz and the 5-foot-8 1/2 Shane Mosley)** and he never fought anyone with a reach longer than his own 72 inches **(Sharmba Mitchell and Zab Judah also had 72-inch reaches)**. In fact, Mayweather's average reach advantage during this period was 2.7 inches, and his most dominant performances came against Carlos Baldomir **(68 inches)** and Juan Manuel Marquez **(67 inches)**.

Of this group of foes, only Mosley – appropriately nicknamed "Sugar" – approached Leonard's skillset, but by the time Mosley fought Mayweather he was 38 and coated with 15 months of rust. Still, Mosley managed to hurt Mayweather more severely than any welterweight opponent when, in Round 2, he landed two sledgehammer rights that scrambled Mayweather's circuits. While the crowd roared for an earth-shaking KO win by Mosley, Mayweather collected himself, rode out the storm and made it back to his corner. After being outlanded 29-18 overall, 18-16 jabs and 17-10 power in the first two rounds, Mayweather proceeded to clinically dissect Mosley for the remainder of the bout.

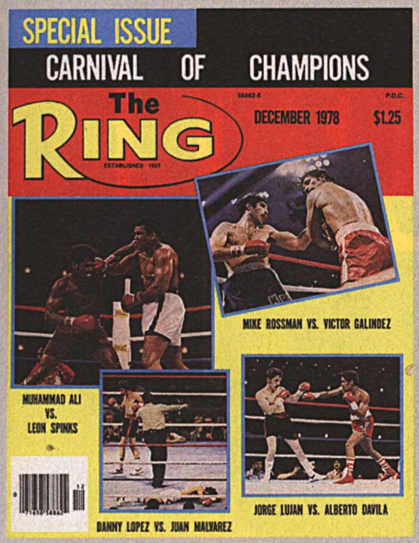
Mayweather's ring generalship kept the pace down – 39.8 punches per round for Mayweather, 37.7 for Mosley – and kept it highly controlled. In the fight's final 10 rounds, Mayweather kept Mosley under double-digit connects in all but one round **(11 in the sixth)** while Mayweather landed no fewer than 14 (in the eighth). In the final four rounds, Mayweather outlanded a discouraged Mosley 83-24 overall and 53-15 power to expand his final leads to 208-92 overall, 85-46 jabs and 123-46 power, as well as 43.6%-20.4% overall, 40.5%-16.3% jabs and 46.1%-27.2% power.

Excluded from this study is the one fighter during this phase of Mayweather's career who boasted both height and reach advantages – the 5-foot-10½ Oscar De La Hoya, whose wingspan measured 73 inches, dimensions that nearly mirrored those of Leonard **(5-foot-10, 74 inches)**. That's because their fight took place at 154, and, unlike all the other fights during this phase, Mayweather was considered the "B-side." But even before the first bell sounded, Mayweather's marketing genius – demonstrated in full by the "Money" character he created in the debut of HBO's *24/7* series – enabled him to create his own star, a star he maintains to this day.

PREDICTION:

This fight will be a high-speed chess match of the highest order and, at least in the opening few rounds, it will be a war of nerves as each man assesses his counterpart's strengths and weaknesses. The man who identifies and exploits those factors first will take a huge step toward victory.

The biggest difference between Leonard and the welterweight version of Mayweather is that Leonard had much more experience fighting the best fighters *while* they were at their very



LEONARD OVER MAYWEATHER

BY DON HAMILL

The following article appeared in the December 1978 issue of THE RING and is presented here in its original form (aside from notes in parentheses).

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Sugar Ray Leonard, Baltimore, Md., made Floyd Mayweather, Detroit, Mich. his 14th win on the road to a possible world championship.

Mayweather, on paper, was to be Ray's toughest contest to date. Many critics had said that most of Leonard's thirteen previous wins had been against nobodys. That may be so, but against Mayweather he looked like a fellow who may have talent. He's a better class of boxer than fellow Olympic winners Howard Davis, Leo Randolph, and Michael Spinks.

The fight itself was Ray's all the way. He let Mayweather control the first two minutes of each round and then came on to score heavily in the last minute. The only frame that Floyd won was the first.

After the bout, Mayweather stated that he hurt his right wrist in the first round. Floyd was on the deck twice in round eight. The referee halted the contest in the last round (Round 10) after Leonard threw a flurry.

Trainer Angelo Dundee: "Ray fought against a good pro. He went to school today. He had to club fight this guy, take charge of him and run the fight."

Mayweather on Leonard: "He's a fairly decent puncher, but he's no kayo artist. A surprise shot of his might take you out and he might get you with a flurry, but he can't really punish you if you see it coming. You got to have a punch in this game. If you ain't got a punch, you can't keep people off you. As Leonard moves up the ladder trying to get that title, he's gonna meet a lot of people like that."

Ray's remarks after the bout: "I sure nailed him with a lot of right hands to the same spot on the side of the head. As a human, I kinda felt like the fight should have been stopped in the sixth. A guy shouldn't have to stay in there and just get banged around."

There are two things we found out. First, Leonard is a target for a good left jab. Second, most welters in the top ten will be outboxed by him – most of them can't bang.

Ray's next outing is against Randy Shields in Baltimore. Shields was murdered by Wilfred Benitez last time out. The only obstacle in Ray's way in the welterweight division is WBC champion Jose (Pipino) Cuevas. Jose is just too much of a puncher for Ray at this time. (Carlos) Palomino would be a tough bout, but Leonard would have an even chance against the world welter king.

best. Conversely, Mayweather denied himself this valuable experience by how he conducted the latter part of his career. By choosing fighters with enormous fan bases but who also had at least one significant flaw (size, age, weight, experience, talent, composure, recent defeats in big fights) that tipped the scale his way, Mayweather succeeded wildly in terms of generating victories and record purses for himself but, at the same time, he didn't allow himself to enhance his legacy or to grow even more as a fighter by pushing the limits of his undeniable talent. Leonard also played this game late in his career, but by then he had already conquered Benitez, Duran, Hearns and Hagler. While Mayweather was a big winner throughout his nearly 21-year pro career, he will pay the price for his late-career choices against the greatest version of Sugar Ray Leonard, whose array of assets represented rarefied air with which Mayweather was unfamiliar.

Having been in a position to "bring it up from his gut" under the most pressurized circumstances, Leonard will draw from that experience – as well as from his fight from the senior Mayweather – and find a way to solve the Mayweather puzzle a second time. He will employ similar tactics against the famed "shoulder roll" defense" – jabs to the body, splitting the guard with 45-degree hooks, attacking the body ferociously to weaken the legs and making sure to finish strong in the rounds' final minute to steal close rounds – while also taking the role of intelligent aggressor, which he has the freedom to do given his size advantages. In this mode, Leonard will force Mayweather into an even deeper shell than is usually the case, and, given Mayweather's already subpar output, that could plunge the man named "Money" into a deep mathematical and strategic hole. Not only was Leonard as smart as Mayweather in terms of ring strategy, he boasted superior shot-for-shot power, especially with the left hook. While both men have suffered from chronic hand problems, the importance of this fight will push both men to invest fully in their punches, and while Mayweather was a solid and respectable hitter, Leonard operated on an even higher level.

On top of everything else, Leonard possessed a tremendous finishing kick, win or lose. He outlanded Duran 52-31 overall in the final two rounds of fight one, Benitez by 100-61 overall in the final three rounds, Bonds 65-19 in the concluding two rounds and Hearns 69-18 in round 13 and 14 – while Mayweather was in such control of his matches that he didn't need to urgently kick up the pace to close the show. We know how Leonard performed under severe duress, but how would Mayweather fare against the best version of one of the best fighters in history?

The son will fare better than the father, and while he will enjoy moments of success, he won't have enough of them to get the "W." Leonard by unanimous decision.

IT WASN'T PRETTY, IT WASN'T COMPETITIVE, BUT TYSON FURY FINALLY RETURNED TO THE RING, SO GO AHEAD …

CALL IT A COMEBACK

By **Gareth A Davies**

Tyson Fury did more showboating than punching in the first two rounds of his long-awaited comeback, but he captured some of his old form by Rounds 3 and 4.

It was as bizarre as it was uncomfortable in the first comeback fight of Tyson Fury's career, but could we really have expected anything different? It has never been cut-and-dried for the former No. 1 heavyweight in the world and the man who once held the RING Magazine belt. Unorthodox has been his mantra. The "Gypsy King" is just himself … and inimitable.

From the lifting of the opponent at the weigh-in to the kiss before the fight to the two rounds of showboating before Fury actually went to work against little-known Albanian Sefer Seferi, the returning heavyweight opened the door enough to allow us to peek in and learn one thing: He is finally fit to fight, but a long way from "fighting fit."

Expect a succession of similar warm-up opponents in the next few months.

Not surprising when you consider this: In November 2015, the towering 6-foot-9 British heavyweight claimed the three sanctioning-body belts held by grandmaster Wladimir Klitschko, who had not been beaten for nigh on 11 years. Fury had not fought since. In that hazy hiatus, a new British heavyweight star, Anthony Joshua, had emerged and usurped all three of those belts, becoming the sport's biggest draw.

Conversely, in his 31 months on the sidelines, much of it self-imposed, Fury had dealt with a veritable sporting lifetime of issues: a backdated two-year ban for a doping offense, an admittance to binging on cocaine, being stripped of two belts (the RING and IBF) and vacating two others (the WBA and WBO crowns). He had canceled two rematches with Klitschko, had his license taken away by the British Boxing Board, battled depression, and ballooned to 27 stone (378 pounds) in weight.

That's why, now 100 pounds lighter, re-licensed and seemingly rejuvenated, the big man is at least back in the ring, back in the game. But forget challenging the likes of Joshua and Deontay Wilder, holder of the other portion of the heavyweight crown, any time soon.

The Fury-Seferi fight might have been labeled a farce in many quarters, but it

was a successful comeback in as much as Fury had gotten the weight off and had gotten back in the saddle and added the 26th notch in the win column of his pristine record. What was perhaps missing was the decisive knockout. When Seferi was hit by heavy punches in the fourth stanza, he was pulled out of the contest by his corner. In the first and second rounds, though, Fury played to the 15,000-strong gallery in the arena, showboating his way through it, and was even warned by referee Phil Edwards for looking to friends ringside.

Moreover, the two men in the ring were even momentarily distracted during the fight by a brawl that had broken out in the crowd not far from one of the neutral corners. Fury rocked Seferi with a long straight right in the third, and then later in the round landed a right uppercut and cuffing right hook, gradually throwing off the ring rust. Indeed, both promoter Frank Warren and Fury's father, former professional heavyweight boxer John, were exhorting the boxer to get his focus during the fight and to cease showboating. They wanted Fury "to get Seferi out of there." They were right, of course. By the

Once Fury let his hands go, he immediately imposed his greater size upon Seferi.

fourth, Fury was looking for a decisive finish as he unleashed a few booming, heavy hands, an uppercut seemingly sealing the deal. But he was denied more by the Albanian's corner.

It was what we all knew it would be – a one-sided return to action against an unheralded cruiserweight (second ranked in his own country after his brother Nuri Seferi) 70 pounds lighter and 10 inches shorter – but Hall of Fame promoter Warren confirmed that the heavyweight will box again on the undercard of Carl Frampton's next contest at Windsor Park in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on August 18. The PR error was probably, looking back, not having a 6-foot-4, 260-pound heavyweight for Fury to toy with and knock over.

"It felt fantastic to be back," said Fury, who received the greatest reception in the Manchester Arena that I have ever witnessed in 10 years covering this most unusual of meandering careers. There were clearly nerves on the night, and they were visible. He was back on the horse, familiar in the role, but not grooved from inactivity. "Manchester, you are wonderful. Seferi came here, I knew he was a tough guy, but his corner pulled him out. It was like I was having my debut again. It has been a long time out of the ring; there is still work to do. Frank Warren will keep me busy and the caliber of the opponents will keep on rising. I'm aiming to have a title shot by the end of the year." Unlikely for the 29-year-old.

Fellow British heavyweight Tony Bellew, ranked No. 6 by the WBC, acted with alacrity to put himself forward as an opponent, with Warren saying it was possible by the end of the year. But the biggest takeaway from the return of Fury, regardless of his joy at being back, is that he remains a very long way from being close to challenging at elite level again, and will need to notably increase his focus – which he will do against opponents carrying greater danger. The fight with Bellew would sell in the U.K., given Bellew's two successful fights with now-retired David Haye.

"I want someone big, not small ones," said Fury at the post-fight news conference. "Look at Deontay Wilder and Anthony Joshua; they're big guys. I've got to prepare for people like that." And as Fury put it, with more realism: "I had a little dance under the lights. It was a bit of a loosener back. Couple more fights and I will be ready. If I am brutally honest, I could have done him in the first 10 seconds. But what good would that have done me?"

Fury enjoyed being back in the spotlight during the build-up to his comeback bout.

It's intriguing to take a look back in heavyweight history; George Foreman and Muhammad Ali make an interesting study. Foreman retired in 1977, and after a 10-year absence returned in 1987. It took him 30 fights, seven years later, to knock out Michael Moorer to become the heavyweight champion again. He was 45. He also fought eight times in his first year back. Ali, out of boxing for three years and seven months, took 17 fights over a four-year period before he beat Foreman in Zaire to reclaim the world heavyweight crown.

Key in the coming months will be the relationship with Ben Davison, Fury's 25-year-old trainer, quite literally a constant companion living with the heavyweight boxer at his home in Morecambe, near Liverpool.

"With Tyson, I've had to be a trainer, psychologist, physiologist, nutritionist and a friend," Davison told THE RING. "It's been a lot of work. It's had to be a very calculated process; I've sacrificed six months of my life. Even now, when I finish a session, I assess where Tyson is to see how he is mentally. I've got to make sure he's not eating this or that. It's a 24/7 job; I'm with him the whole time. The last thing (the late, great trainer) Brendan Ingle said to me was: 'You're doing a very good job there. This job is 24/7, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.' It's so true."

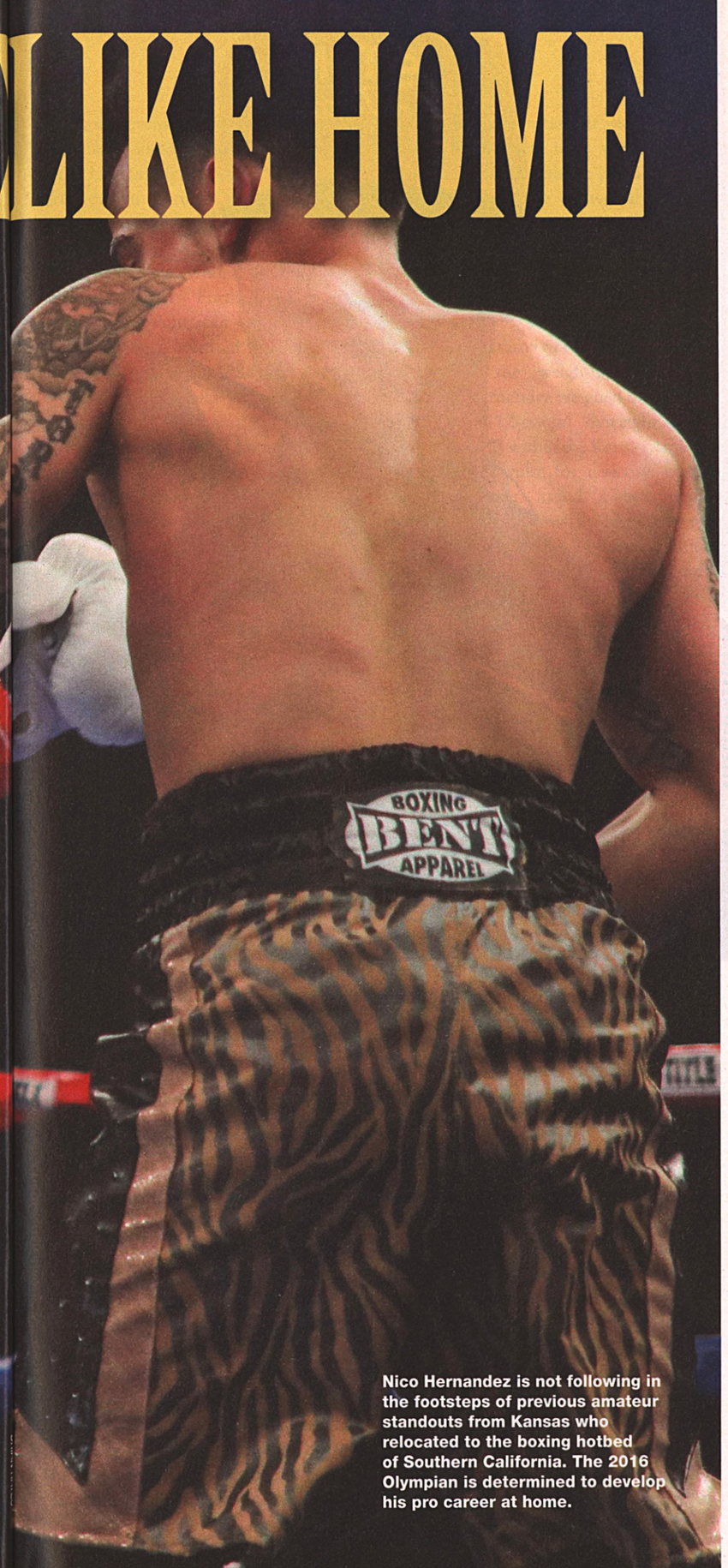
Davison had employed, incidentally, a ketogenic diet to get Fury's weight down. "It's a zero carbohydrates, high-protein and high-fat diet. It was hard, because when you're not taking in carbohydrates you feel a bit lethargic. It was grueling for him to get through those sessions. But when he did, I knew then and there the determination was there. He's done it for 26 weeks now. If that doesn't tell you he's serious about coming back, I don't know what will."

Davison is happy where they are: "We're not the finished article yet. But I'm proud of him. No credit should go to trainers." Three more camps, three more fights and Fury, reckons Davison, could be ready for major-name opponents. "When you spend time with him and see him at work, that's when you really understand what I mean. There's nothing Tyson can't work out. As his father John has said, the only person who can beat Tyson is himself." That appears to be so true.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

NICO HERNANDEZ IS AIMING TO PUT KANSAS ON THE BOXING MAP THROUGH HIS CLIMB TOWARD A WORLD TITLE

By **Michael Montero**



Nico Hernandez is not following in the footsteps of previous amateur standouts from Kansas who relocated to the boxing hotbed of Southern California. The 2016 Olympian is determined to develop his pro career at home.

When one thinks of traditional American boxing markets, Wichita, Kansas, does not come to mind. After all, it was over a century ago when Jess Willard knocked out Jack Johnson for the heavyweight title in 1915 that the state of Kansas could claim a world champion. Yet Willard, who was born and raised in Kansas, never once fought there as a pro. Fast-forward to the 21st century, and although former welterweight titleholder Victor Ortiz grew up in Kansas, he fought out of Oxnard, California, for his entire professional career. In his youth, former lightweight beltholder Brandon Rios trained with Ortiz at the same gym in Garden City, Kansas, only to eventually follow him to California.

So when Wichita-bred Nico Hernandez brought home a bronze medal from the 2016 Summer Olympics and shortly thereafter launched his professional career just outside his hometown, it was more than a big deal; it was unprecedented.

Nico, the oldest of four children to Lewis and Chello Hernandez, began boxing at the age of 9. He grew up in a family that loved the sport, his uncle was a boxer and there were always fights on at home.

"My family would always watch boxing," Nico told THE RING, "I remember my dad would always order the fights, have friends and family over."

After a few fistfights with kids in the neighborhood, young Nico begged his father to teach him to box. Lewis, a diesel truck mechanic who had trained Nico's uncle and other fighters before, agreed to teach his son the sweet science.

"I told Nico if you're going to box, it's something you have to take serious," said Lewis. "I took him to a friend's gym and sparred him with three or four guys; he got busted up pretty good. I wanted to see if that discouraged him. I asked him, 'You still want to fight?' and he said, 'Yeah,' so then I started teaching him how to fight."

They started small, so small in fact that most of Nico's early boxing lessons were in his bedroom, working on the mitts and shadowboxing.

"I started with Nico in the bedroom, and next thing you know I get a few

other kids who wanted to join," said Lewis. "Here at my home I had eight kids training in the bedroom. It was just too small."

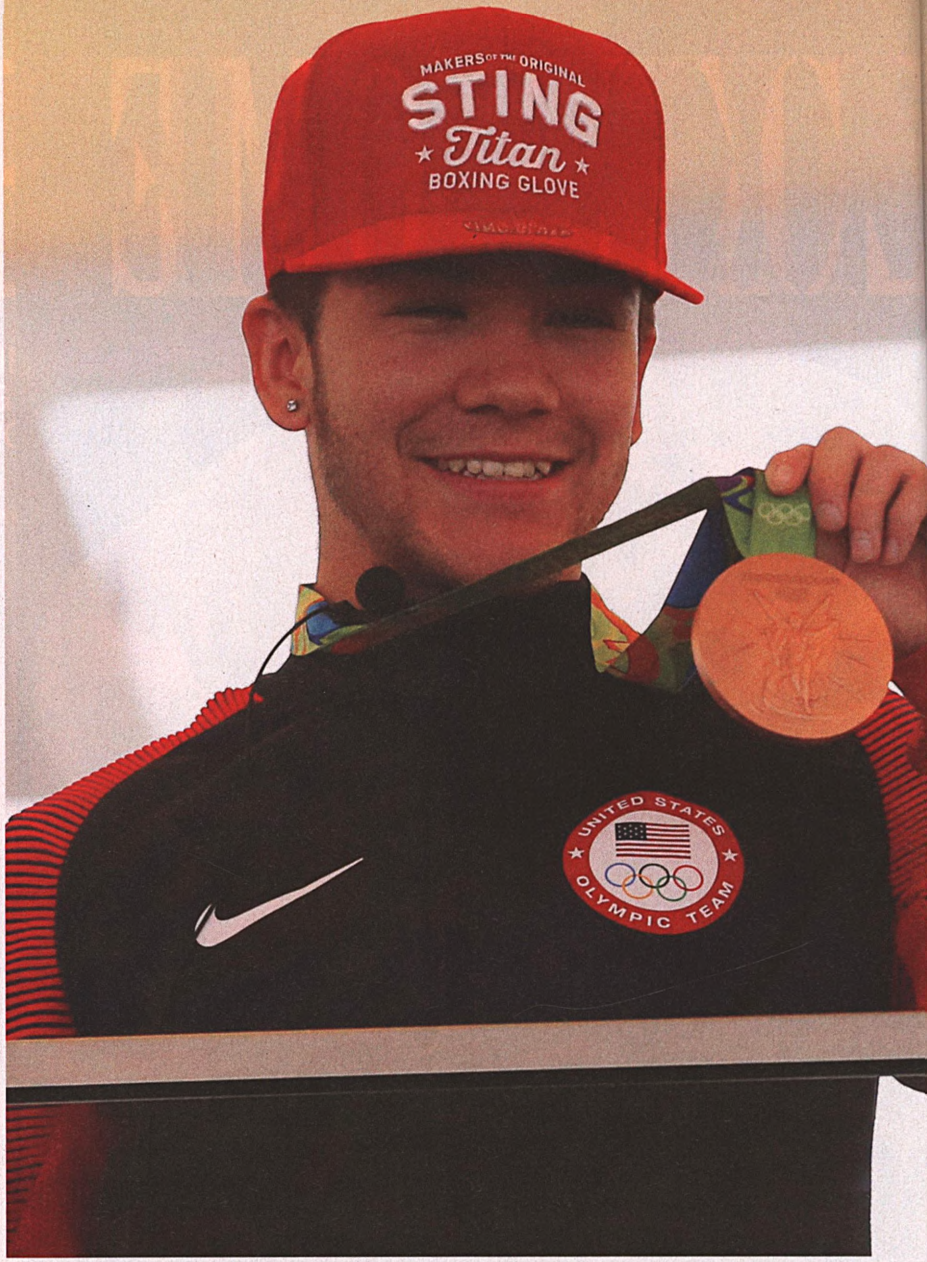
From there, the group that would eventually become the Hernandez Boxing Academy took the operation to the backyard. Lewis took old wooden fence panels and laid them out in the shape of a ring; the kids would jump rope and spar on them. The extra space helped, but provided no shelter during the cold Wichita winters. A neighbor saw the kids working out and offered the use of his garage. "It was still really cold; we had no heat at all," said Lewis, "but at least we were out of the wind." Eventually, Lewis and the gang were able to lease a gym in their neighborhood, the rough north side of town. Now there were over 40 kids from the community, including several at-risk kids, who had a place to punch out their frustrations, build some confidence and learn the sport of boxing.

Around the same time, another boy named Tony Losey asked Lewis to train him. Tony had a rough childhood and by his teens had been in trouble with the law. While many others had given up on him, Lewis agreed to work with him. Tony immediately took a liking to Nico. Even though they were five years apart in age and had completely different reputations around town, they bonded through boxing.

"He was like my big brother," said Nico. "He took me everywhere and I kind of shadowed him. Everybody loved watching him fight. I wanted to be like him."

Tony became so close with Nico and Lewis that he even lived with the Hernandez family for a while. Within a few years he had finished school and completely turned his life around. He was now the head of his own household, working full-time to provide for his wife and children, and was a nationally ranked welterweight with Olympic dreams.

"He went from this bad kid that nobody liked to a person that everybody loved," said Lewis. At the same time, Nico was prospering as a young amateur. He won his first 25 bouts and did not lose again until his 86th, winning numerous tournaments along the way. It seemed that the boys were destined to go to Rio together; there was no stopping them. Everything was going right, until it all suddenly went wrong.



Hernandez shows off his bronze medal from the 2016 Olympic Games. He was courted by some prominent promoters but instead signed with a smaller company to receive more attention and have more control of his career.

On September 23, 2014, Tony was involved in an industrial accident on the job that tragically took his life. In an instant he was gone, leaving behind a wife, children and a community devastated. Lewis and Nico were in shock. They had lost more than a friend; they had lost family. For about a month after the incident, father and son would go back to the spot where Tony died, attempting to make sense of it all.

"Our dream was to go to the 2016 Olympics together and then turn pro together," said Nico. Having now lost his best friend and mentor, there was only one way to move forward. Nico was more determined to succeed than ever; it was Rio or bust. He was no longer fighting for himself, he was fighting – and dreaming – for Tony as well.

After such a disappointing turnout for the American men's team at the 2012 London Games, the pressure was on for the 2016 class to perform. The spotlight was on better-known fighters like eventual silver medalist

Shakur Stevenson, and Hernandez was an afterthought heading into Rio. Yet with his come-from-behind victory over Ecuadorian Carlos Quipo Pilataxi in the quarterfinal round, Nico became the first American male to medal in boxing since Deontay Wilder at the 2008 Beijing Games. Further, Hernandez was the first American junior flyweight to medal since eventual Hall of Famer Michael Carbajal in 1988, and the first athlete from Wichita to medal in any sport since 1984.

Nico returned to his hometown with a hero's welcome. There was a parade and a four-year scholarship to Wichita State University that he may use at any time. The city even sold the building where Nico trained to the Hernandez family for one dollar, guaranteeing that other aspiring boxers in Wichita would always have a place to hone their craft. Nico's Olympic success was no surprise on the north side of Wichita, but for much of the American boxing community he had burst onto the scene from relative obscurity. Suddenly, Lewis was getting calls from promoters.

Powerhouse companies like Top Rank were interested, but ultimately Hernandez would sign a year-by-year deal with little-known KO Night Promotions out of Las Vegas. "They reached out to us," said Lewis, "they thought Nico was really marketable. But not only that – they thought he could fight.

For Lewis, he preferred going with a smaller promoter that would focus their attention on his son.

"You look at the Golden Boys and the Top Ranks and they're great companies," said Lewis, "but are they going to give you the personal attention? They got a lot of top dogs coming up; they're not going to make Nico their top dog. With KO Night Boxing, right now they make us their priority."

Nico's professional debut was on March 25, 2017, in Mulvane, about 20 miles south of Wichita, in front of over 3,000 fans. The fight was broadcast live on CBS Sports Network, the same network that has aired all of his pro fights to date. Hernandez won via fourth-round stoppage to the delight of the hometown fans. It was a similar result for his next bout a few months later in Park City, about 10 miles north of Wichita, where he would score a third-round KO win. The first two fights went about as well as could be scripted. Yet things would hit a snag in his third bout.

Originally scheduled opponent Basyzbek Baratov of Kyrgyzstan backed out after the weigh-in, apparently because Hernandez weighed one pound over the 112-pound flyweight limit, which is legal within the Kansas Athletic Commission rules for non-title bouts. The promoter found a last-minute replacement, a naturally bigger fighter who made the most of his opportunity. He came out guns blazing in the opening round, stunning Hernandez with a flush shot that had the crowd gasping. But Nico made the proper adjustments and dominated the rest of the fight, winning via unanimous decision. For him it was a valuable learning experience.

"I got my chin tested early by a bigger fighter, but I was able to take it, keep moving forward and get the 'W,'" said Hernandez. "I think that fight will help me in the future, knowing I can take a hit. I'm not scared of anybody's power in my own weight class."

Hernandez opened his 2018 campaign against another late substitute opponent, whom he stopped in the fifth round. His second bout of the year, which was on May 19 against Hungarian Szilveszter Kanalas, was for a minor world title. Hernandez (now 5-0, 4 knockouts) won via first-round KO and called out fellow 2016 Olympian Paddy Barnes (also 5-0) of Ireland afterward.

He plans to stay busy for the rest of the year and go for a world title in 2019. While most other trainers would develop their prospect slowly, Lewis prefers the fast track for his son.

"My deal is this: If you're great and you're talented, why keep getting beat up for no reason?" said Lewis. "If you can fight, you can fight. Go for the world title. I don't see any problem with it."

When a title opportunity does arise, Team Hernandez has no fear stamping their passport or going up against an establishment promoter's fighter. "In a way we're concerned about getting a decision, but Nico is an outstanding fighter," said Lewis. "It's like with Terence Crawford; when he went to (Ricky Burns') backyard (to fight for a lightweight title in Scotland), he beat him up good enough to where there was no doubt about it."

Like Crawford, a fighter who built himself into a real attraction in his hometown of Omaha, Nebraska, Nico envisions himself selling out the biggest venues in Wichita.

"I want to turn this into a fight city so I can do fights here," said Nico.

Intrust Bank Arena, which sits downtown only three miles south of the Hernandez Boxing Academy, has a capacity of 15,000.

"It's definitely a goal of mine to fight there," said Nico, who feels the timing is perfect for him to make his mark, as the smaller divisions are finally getting real attention on American cable, most notably with promoter Tom Loeffler's "Superfly" series on HBO.

"Roman Gonzalez set the tone for the little fighters," said Nico. "Nobody was looking at little fighters until his name started popping up. Now with this 'Superfly' series going on, it motivates me because I really don't care how big you are – if you show an exciting fight, people are going to want to watch you."

No matter where boxing takes him, Nico Hernandez will always stay true to his roots, back to where it all started, hitting mitts with his father in the bedroom, absorbing life lessons from his adopted older brother.

"I know if Tony was here he would be proud of me," said Nico, "I know he's proud of me right now."

Whether he fights in his hometown or on the other side of the world, the 22-year-old never feels alone in the ring.

"At all my fights as a kid I would always hear Tony's voice in the crowd yelling at me. I still hear him yelling at me now. I feel like he's there supporting me." RING

Michael Montero can be found on Twitter, Youtube, Facebook and Instagram via @MonteroOnBoxing

COMEBACK KID

OLYMPIAN **NATASHA JONAS** IS BACK IN THE GAME AND KICKING ASS LIKE A PRO

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

"Tom, don't be stupid. Shut up."

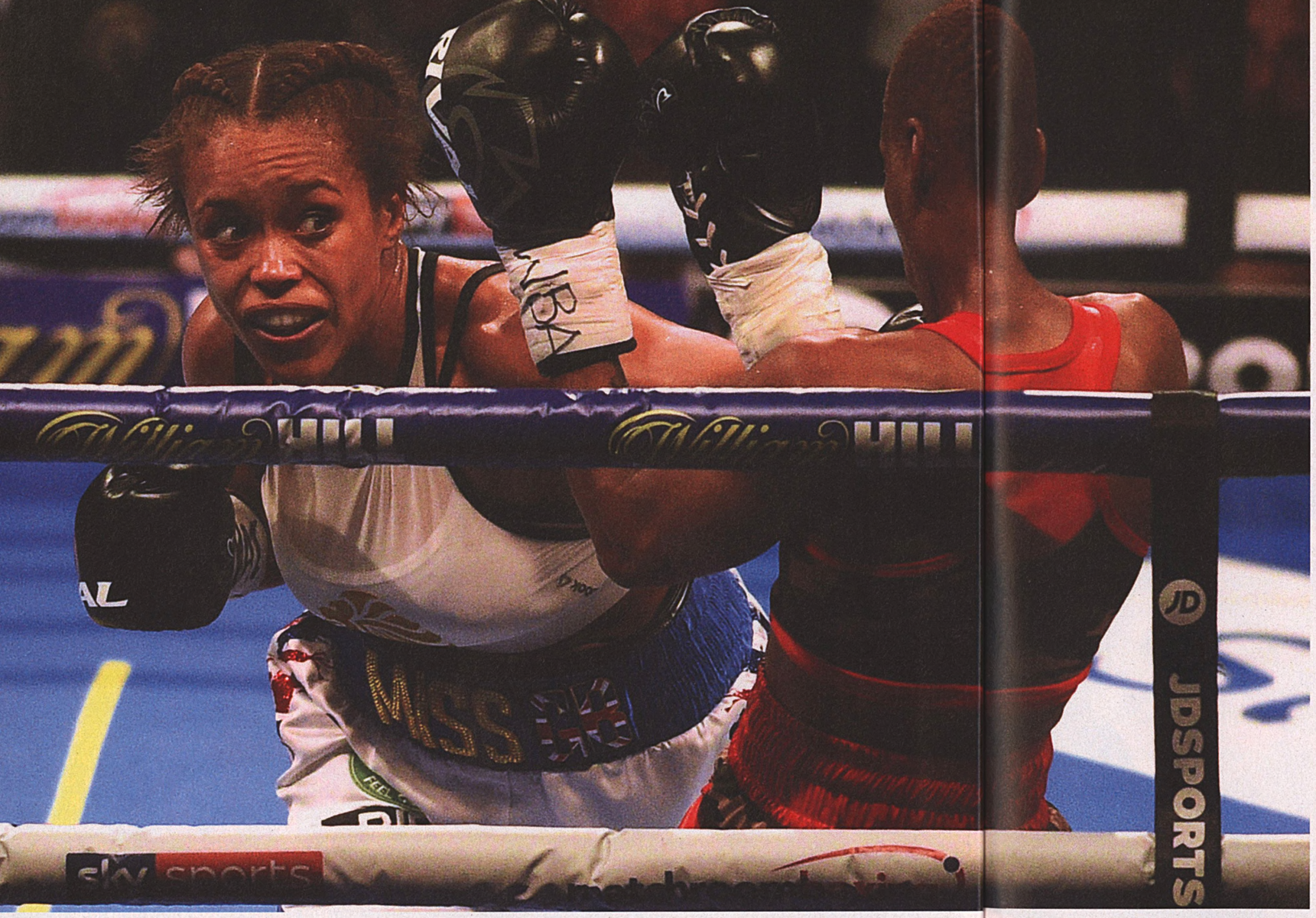
It was no way for Natasha Jonas to speak to her former Team GB squadmate Thomas Stalker, but it was all in good fun as the two laughed after Stalker suggested that it was time for Jonas to return from her self-imposed retirement to begin a career in professional boxing.

It was late 2016, and as far as Stalker, the scout and matchmaker for MTK Global, was concerned, with Katie Taylor, Claressa Shields and Savannah Marshall all starting to make their moves into the pro ranks after making it to the Olympic Games, it was only natural for Jonas to follow suit.

But the first female British boxer to represent her nation in the Olympics wasn't so sure.

"People don't see the tears, like after the 2012 Olympics," Jonas said, looking back. "They don't see the tears when I wasn't going to Rio or when I lost in the Commonwealth Games. My friends and family see those sides and they know how hard it is. They know how high the highs are, but they also know how low it can go. So I asked them."

At the time, Jonas had moved on from boxing. She gave birth to a daughter, Mela, and that alone kept her from thinking about the sport she left in 2015. »



It didn't take the hard-working Jonas long to establish herself as a world-class professional.

"When you're a new mom, I think you're just so overwhelmed with making sure the baby's fine that you forget about your own routine," she said.

Her former routine led her to the top of the amateur game in England, culminating in a trip to the 2012 London Games. Jonas defeated Queen Underwood in the round of 16, but in the quarterfinals, she lost to eventual gold medal winner Katie Taylor. It was disappointing, but Jonas was determined to get back to the Rio Games.

That didn't happen, with a loss to Australia's Shelley Watts in the 2014 Commonwealth Games spelling the beginning of the end for her amateur career. In that fight, Jonas snapped two ligaments in her foot, taking her out of the remaining qualifiers.

"When I knew I was gonna miss the qualifiers, I knew in my own heart of hearts that I wasn't gonna stay until 2020. There was no point in taking the journey and training and being there and being around it when I knew I wasn't going to go to the Olympics, which is the end result, really."

Jonas announced her retirement in April 2015. Two years later, she was pondering a return. Her family and friends were on board. Now she just needed a team, with a trainer being the key part of the puzzle.

She thought of the big names in Europe: Shane McGuigan, Tony Sims, Adam Booth. But they weren't close enough to home for Jonas, who now had Mela to raise. Then there was Rob McCracken, the head coach of Team GB for the London Games and current trainer of star heavyweight Anthony Joshua. Ultimately, though, Jonas felt the best fit was going to be Joe Gallagher.

"If I'm honest, Joe has taken boxers who are maybe seen as over-the-hill or seen as having reached their level and he's taken them to world-class," Jonas said. "So I thought that's the best coach for me. If there's one coach that can take me from start to finish or start to world-class, that's Joe."

Gallagher, who had never trained a female fighter before, wasn't skeptical of Jonas' chances of success in the pro game, but he knew there was work to be done.

"Natasha was a challenge," said Gallagher, The RING Trainer of the Year in 2015 and someone used to taking on such projects. "She had been out for a while. People are saying she's past it now and too old, and she's one of them that, like Anthony Crolla years ago when he lost to an ice cream man early in his career, they said he wasn't going to amount to anything. They also said Liam Smith – when he drew early on in his career – wasn't going to do anything. So when they were telling me Natasha was a bit old now and she's become a mum and it isn't for her, it just made me think I was gonna prove everyone wrong with her. And it was a project and a challenge for me as a coach as well, to make her successful."

The official announcement of Jonas' return came in April 2017. Two months later she debuted with a 92-second knockout of Monika Antonik, and in April 2018 the 33-year-old southpaw picked up her sixth win and the WBA international junior lightweight title with a seventh-round TKO of Taoussy L'Hadji.

It was Jonas' first bout of significance; Gallagher's been there and done that. But if you're judging by social media posts, the coach was even happier than the fighter.

"To have seen everything that she's put herself through over the last 12 months and to win a title in front of her adoring fans in the Echo Arena, it was just brilliant," beamed Gallagher. "I wish some of the men had the attention to detail that Natasha has. She's great in training, always has a smile on her face and it meant so much for her to win that title. It's been a big journey these past 12 months. She came out of retirement and at the age of 33 won her first title. The next stop is to get her a world title, and that would be a fantastic achievement."

Gallagher already has a champion in mind, expecting that Jonas will have one more fight before making a run at unbeaten WBC titleholder Eva Wahlstrom of Finland.

"Natasha wants that green and gold," said Gallagher, who believes Jonas has the ability to pick up more than one title before she's done. His fighter is on board with that idea.

"I want to be the first female from Britain to unify all the titles in one weight division," Jonas said. "And just be the boxer that I can be. My whole life, I never wanted to regret anything, so I've always just gone for stuff and if it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out. I don't want to get older and think, 'I should have done this.'"

That goes for a lot of things, including a rematch with Taylor, a bout that could be a true superfight in Europe. Jonas wants it, and with both fighters promoted by Eddie Hearn it should be an easy bout to make.

"I think we both know, especially this side of the Atlantic, we are each other's biggest fight," Jonas said. "So if there could be a superfight for women in the U.K., it would be me and her. There's obviously other female boxers here, but because of the Olympics, we're the two that people talk about all the time. And because it was a good fight in the Olympics as well, we're the two that people always want to see. I am at 130 – that is my fighting weight – and I want to get a title at 130. But there's nothing to say that in the future when I've got my titles at 130 that I won't go up, because lightweight was my amateur weight."

If it does happen, a victory over her amateur rival would be the perfect cap on an unlikely comeback story. But she is not going to have her career defined by Katie Taylor; she knows the Natasha Jonas story is pretty compelling in its own right.

"With the U.K. press I've sometimes refused to answer questions about that now because I think my journey is becoming about Katie Taylor, and it's not," Jonas said. "It's not about her. It's about me. Obviously we're both with the same promoter; there's a reason that he signed me, and on the business side of it, it probably will be that we fight each other eventually. But she is not my journey. My journey is my own."

Naoya Inoue took immediate advantage of a weight-drained Jamie McDonnell in his impressive (and brief) bantamweight debut.

FIGHT ROUNDUP

BY **BRIAN HARTY**

RECENT ACTION AND FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE

NAOYA INOUE TKO 1 JAMIE MCDONNELL

May 25, Ota City General Gymnasium, Tokyo

Two weeks before Naoya Inoue entered the ring to face Jamie McDonnell, Vasiliy Lomachenko moved up to lightweight and set a speed record by becoming a three-division titleholder in just his 12th pro fight. Two weeks after Inoue-McDonnell, Terence Crawford would become a three-division titleholder in his welterweight debut. It's a shame that Inoue's contribution to this very welcome trend has to be clouded by the WBA's inability to explain how both he and Ryan Burnett (who holds the RING-recognized "super" WBA belt) can be the bantamweight titleholder. Nevertheless: In just his 16th pro fight and his first at 118 pounds, having already held titles at 108 and 115, Inoue took on the No. 2-ranked fighter in the division and utterly destroyed him.

McDonnell, who'd looked borderline skeletal at the weigh-in, came out jabbing energetically while Inoue calmly circled, waiting. Forty seconds elapsed before he threw his first punch, a jab to the midsection, and just a few seconds later he went liver hunting with a fully leveraged left hook. A brief assault which included a few more crippling bodyshots followed. Then Inoue returned to "unconcerned" mode while McDonnell did his best to adjust to a life that now included being hit by Naoya Inoue.

Just before the round's midpoint, Inoue repurposed his left hook and staggered McDonnell with a shot to the top of his head, then targeted

Terence Crawford dominated Jeff Horn on every level during their WBO welterweight title bout on June 9 in Las Vegas.

his lung with another punch that landed just behind the Brit's upper arm. McDonnell went down. As he waited for referee Luis Pabon to clear out, Inoue glanced at the clock, then plowed in for the finish. McDonnell was helpless under the ensuing hail of punches (the worst of which were left hooks) and went down again just as Pabon stepped in to end the fight. The official time was 1:52.

McDonnell (29-3-1, 13 KOs) was gutted, in terms of both his disappointment and the trauma inflicted on his torso, but said he'll fight on – possibly at 122, given his struggles with weight-drain. Inoue (16-0, 14 KOs), meanwhile, will take part in the World Boxing Super Series bantamweight tournament, which will see the division's top four fighters facing off – including WBA doppelganger Burnett.

TERENCE CRAWFORD TKO 9 JEFF HORN

June 9, MGM Grand, Las Vegas

"Everyone needs a fantasy," said Andy Warhol. Somebody at ESPN probably scribbled the quote at the top of a dry-erase board when they began brainstorming ways to promote Jeff Horn's welterweight title defense against Terence Crawford.

"Real-life Rocky" was an appropriate angle to choose – a low-hanging fruit in terms of cliches but an accurate one in Horn's case: On the worldwide scene, the Australian had been the equivalent of an unknown club fighter from Philly a year ago when he was given a title shot against a superstar (Manny Pacquiao), and he did more than just fight on even terms and survive – he won. Visually he's Rocky-esque as well: His fighting style has a raw look to it; he zigzags forward with awkward footwork and throws full-body punches that start out orthodox and end up southpaw. And in true Rocky form, he's tenacious as hell.

But most of the boxing world wasn't buying into the idea that the WBO titleholder had a chance at pulling off another upset, and despite the fact that Crawford was making his debut at welterweight, the former 135-pound and 140-pound champion was installed as the lopsided favorite by oddsmakers. After a refreshingly brief rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," it was clear why. Horn was aggressive, barrelling in head-first trying to land punches on his way to smothering the challenger, but the strategy didn't trouble Crawford too long. Even in the first round, the man from Nebraska was landing short, accurate uppercuts to scuttle Horn's charges, and by the third he was in control of the distance, coiled and waiting to pick his shots from the outside.

The endgame had already begun, but Crawford's notorious mean streak (in the ring, that is) prolonged the vivisection while he made two things painfully clear: 1. He is one

of the top three pound-for-pound fighters in the world (No. 1 on some lists). 2. He lost none of his strength in the move up to welterweight. No. 2 was the only realistic question pundits had included in their pre-fight breakdowns, and Crawford answered by pushing Horn around on the inside and knocking him backward with straight blows to the sternum when out in the open.

Horn was all heart and kept trying to rough Crawford up in the clinches, but those opportunities diminished as his attacks were thwarted by the more effective counterpunches coming back at him. Finally, in the ninth round, Crawford had done enough toying and helicoptered Horn to the canvas with a left hook, then landed a series of follow-up punches that cued referee Robert Byrd to intervene at 2:33.

Crawford (33-0, 24 KOs) had said it all along when people went down the Rocky road: "I'm not Manny Pacquiao." That's the truth. Hopefully we'll get to see more of who he really is against top welterweights like Errol Spence Jr. and Keith Thurman, but, as usual, promoter loyalties stand in the way. Fellow Top Rank fighter Jose Benavidez, who scored a first-round knockout of Frank Rojas on the Crawford-Horn undercard, is a more likely candidate.

LEO SANTA CRUZ UD 12 ABNER MARES

June 9, Staples Center, Los Angeles

The first time these two men met to crown the king of Los Angeles in August 2015, they blew the roof off with a brawl that produced 2,037 punches, according to CompuBox – 1,057 of them from Santa Cruz, who won by majority decision. After winning this fight on all three scorecards (117-111, 116-112 and 115-113), Santa Cruz said his plan had been "to be smarter" in defending his featherweight title – box more and brawl less – a strategy he put into action by throwing ... 1,061 punches. In other words, the rematch pretty much picked up where the first one ended.

With his career still haunted by the first-round knockout loss to Jhonny Gonzalez in 2013, there's always the suggestion that Mares (31-3-1, 15 KOs) could crumble at any moment and afterward we'd all swear that we saw it coming. But then, at 32, the three-division titleholder was back and trading with the best like 2013 never happened. There were moments in this rematch when he and Santa Cruz, both born in Mexico and raised in Southern California, fell into that beautiful place where two fighters mesh like gears, synchronizing their rhythms so that

Abner Mares (left) and Leo Santa Cruz somehow managed to put on an even more competitive and entertaining fight with their June 9 rematch, a 12-round slugfest won by Santa Cruz, than they did in their first encounter almost three years ago.

a punch simultaneously fills the void created by a dodge and then the flow reverses, back and forth, angle after angle. Stylistically in the ring and culturally in the audience, it was an event worth waiting for.

Both fighters caught the worst of individual flurries, but Santa Cruz's crisper technique, accuracy and ability to enforce distance with a battering-ram jab stood out among the constant high-volume exchanges. Even Mares graciously admitted in his post-fight interview: "Without a doubt, Leo is the number one featherweight in the world." The ever-humble Santa Cruz (35-1-1, 19 KOs) said it was "hopefully" true.

"I want Gary Russell," he said when asked about his next move, referring to the WBC titleholder who had himself looked as dangerous as ever in a win over Joseph Diaz three weeks earlier. "Let's unify."

JERMELL CHARLO MD12 AUSTIN TROUT

June 9, Staples Center, Los Angeles

Like Abner Mares, Austin Trout is one of those fighters you half expect to be crushed by the full weight of his past at the end of one catastrophic punch. His retirement always seems imminent. And then Trout reminds us that if there's an elite young gun out there who is causing risk-averse contenders to reach for their antacids, he's your go-to guy.

Jermell Charlo was most definitely a high-risk opponent, the most recent win of his four-stoppage streak being a first-round knockout of Erickson Lubin. That streak would end in his third defense of the WBC junior middleweight title as Trout held him to a 12-round decision (just as he had done to Jermell's twin, Jermall, two years before) with a combination of veteran guile and defense – slow-pace tactics that were sometimes loudly unappreciated by the fans there to see the Santa Cruz-Mares main event. The outgunned Trout was able to rally a couple times, but his fate was sealed by a pair of knockdowns in Rounds 3 and 9, the first from a harmless blow but the second the result of a legit left hook to the noggin.

"I went to fish, I tried to get some Trout but I couldn't catch him on the hook," said Charlo (31-0, 15 KOs) after the fight, which he won by scores of 118-108, 115-111 and 113-113. If he came up with that line on the spot, kudos to him – extra points for the "hook" double entendre. Now, if a unification with the current IBF/WBA titleholder

Austin Trout (right) had enough skill and veteran guile to trouble Jermell Charlo and take the defending WBC 154-pound beltholder the distance, but he couldn't avoid getting dropped twice during in a losing effort on June 9.

Errol Spence didn't have any trouble landing flush power punches to Carlos Ocampo's head during their one-round confrontation, but it was a body shot that put the Mexican prospect down and out.

comes to pass, Charlo will have a chance to "cull the Hurd." (OK, that sucked.)

"That's a damn good fight," said Trout (31-5, 17 KOs), who was stopped by (Jarrett) Hurd last October. "I know I'll be tuned in."

ERROL SPENCE JR. KO1 CARLOS OCAMPO

June 16, The Ford Center at the Star, Frisco, Texas

They should've just replaced the ring ropes with yellow tape and put cops in the aisles to say "nothing to see here … move along." Nobody in the 14,000-strong audience was complaining about Spence's one-round victory, though; the crowd was a testament to the hometown fighter's popularity, and everyone knew going in what was likely to happen.

The three minutes the fight lasted actually weren't bad. Making the second defense of his IBF welterweight belt, Spence was working his jab, Ocampo landed a nice left hook and both sides scored with shots to the body. Spence was sharper, but it was by no means a weak start for the undefeated Mexican. And then with just a few seconds left on the clock, the man bedecked in Dallas Cowboys silver corralled Ocampo against the ropes and landed a left – call it a high-angled uppercut or a low-angled hook – just under his foe's ribcage. A right hook also landed behind his arm, but it was surely a delayed reaction from the left that dropped the challenger to all fours with no hope of overcoming the painstorm emanating from his liver. As soon as he was counted out by Laurence Cole, Ocampo rolled onto his back and remained there gasping for a couple minutes.

Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, who stood next to Spence during the post-fight interview, was impressed, drawling, "When you can knock a man out by hittin' him right in the side of his back, you're bad to the bone!"

Spence said it was "a little disappointing" that the fight was over so quickly, but that body punching was his plan from the start: "That's what I do. I'm the bodysnatcher." He also said he wants the winner of the Shawn Porter-Danny Garcia fight scheduled for August 25. Should that happen, there's one Texas billionaire eager to play host.

"He can fight again tonight if somebody wants to step up here!" said Jones. RING

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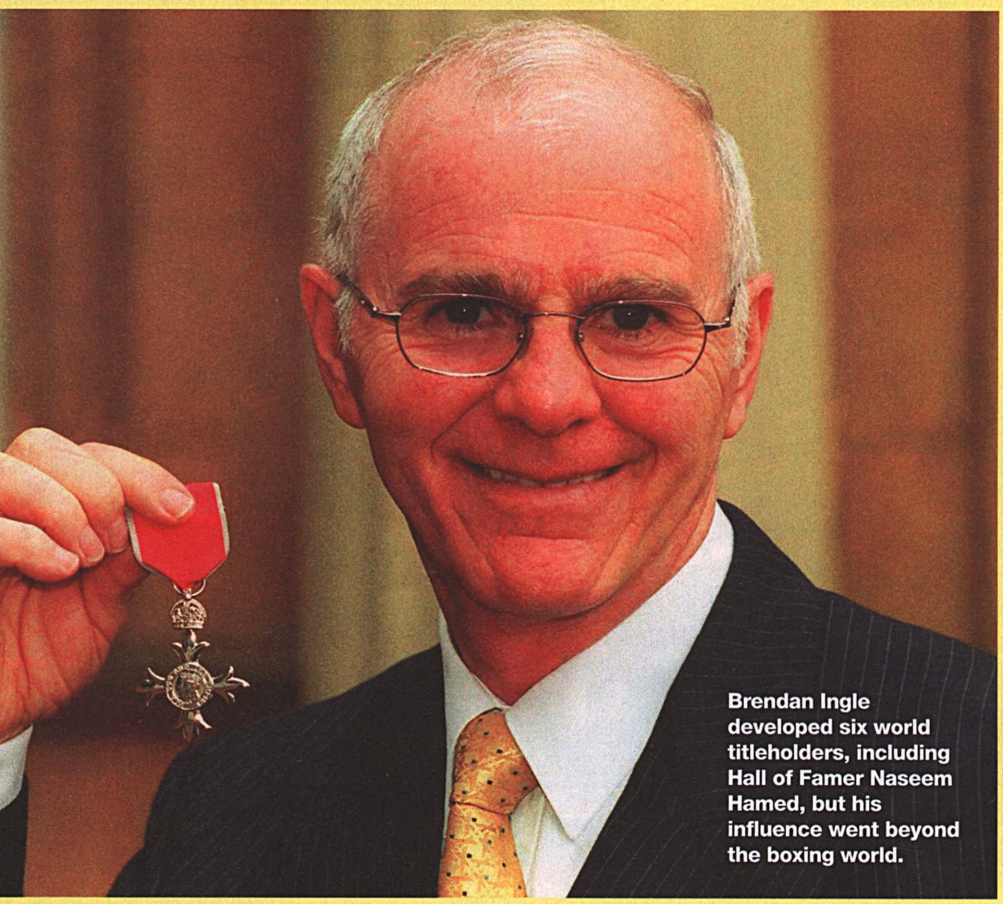
WORLD BEAT



Brendan Ingle developed six world titleholders, including Hall of Famer Naseem Hamed, but his influence went beyond the boxing world.

U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

BRITISH BOXING LOSES SVENGALI BRENDAN INGLE: 'THE WORLD'S GREATEST TRAINER'

Irish boxing sage Brendan Ingle was special, a one-off as a trainer and pioneer. He changed thousands of lives in his Wincobank Gym on a suburban hillside in the Steel City of Sheffield. He was not just a coach; he combined his boxing teachings with the skills and roles of a social worker and even a priest. Little wonder the turnout for his memorial service in mid-June in his adopted city, after he had passed away at the age of 77, was attended by a Who's Who from both British boxing and those whose lives he changed. Everyone has a story of a moment with Brendan. He was as kind to the media guys as he was to his fighters. And brutally honest.

He was best remembered as the Paddy who trained the Prince, for his time with "Prince" Naseem Hamed, but he devised a boxing system and created a conveyor belt of champions. Ingle arrived in Sheffield from Dublin in 1957 and led by example. He would get up at a quarter to four in the morning, run eight miles up and down steep hills and then work 12-hour shifts as a blacksmith striker with a hammer in searing heat in the steel smelters.

He coached, cajoled and educated in a style all of his own, and leaves a huge legacy in British boxing. A former professional boxer himself, he trained six world champions: Johnny Nelson, Paul "Silky" Jones, Naseem Hamed, Clinton Woods, Junior Witter and Kell Brook. Nelson called Ingle "the greatest trainer in the world."

Ingle was immensely proud of being awarded an honorary doctorate from Sheffield Hallam University (he was dyslexic, which made the honorary doctorate even more poignant) and an MBE from the Queen in 1998 for his services and contributions to British boxing and his work with young people in the Sheffield area. He changed a community, he preached a way of life through the skills, discipline and knowledge from a life lived with boxing as the cornerstone. Though Ingle had been suffering from Alzheimer's, he was still in the gym almost every day right to the end. Rightly, there are plans to erect a statue in his memory in the city. RIP Brendan. You will be missed forever.

★★★

In the same week, British boxing lost another loyal servant in Dean Francis. Dean's death, at the young age of 44, came after a year-long battle with cancer. The former European and British champion at super middleweight and light heavyweight was hugely popular, and it was reflected when fellow fighters including Chris Eubank Sr., James DeGale, Glenn Catley and Lee Haskins attended his service at South Bristol Crematorium. Francis, nicknamed "Star," turned professional in 1994 and was a brutal exponent of the hook. He stopped boxing in 2014 with a record of 34-5-1 (26 KOs). RIP Star.

★★★

28-year-old junior bantamweight Kal Yafai is deepening his mark on the division; latest delivery was a victory over David Carmona in the British fighter's USA debut. Remarkably, Carmona missed weight by almost four pounds, but that did not stop Yafai from making a major statement with multiple knockdowns of his foe in Fresno, California. Yafai improved to 24-0

(15 KOs), putting Carmona (21-6-5, 9 KOs) on the canvas in the first round, fourth round (low blow, though) and twice in the fifth – although the visitor was deducted a point for striking Carmona while he was down.

★★★

Elsewhere, Terry Flanagan will have to rebuild his career after losing a split decision for the vacant WBO 140-pound world title against Maurice Hooker with a bizarre set of scores returned by the three ringside officials. Flanagan suffered his first defeat in his 34th professional contest as he attempted to become a two-weight world titleholder and emulate his teenage hero, Ricky Hatton. The scores were 115-113 and 117-111 for the Dallas fighter, who improved his unbeaten record to 24-0-3 (16 KOs). The third judge had it 117-111 to the Mancunian. Those scores mean that two judges diverged in scoring nine rounds to three for opposite fighters. But Hooker deserved the victory for his cleaner, largely right-handed work.

Ditto for Jamie McDonnell, who was undone in Tokyo by a "Monster": Japanese star Naoya Inoue, already a two-division world titleholder and one of the pound-for-pound best in boxing, making his bantamweight debut with a first-round knockout. McDonnell's five-inch height advantage was completely irrelevant for the 5-foot-5 Inoue, who now joins the World Boxing Super Series (WBSS) 118-pound tournament.

On that note, Comosa AG, backers of the WBSS, have seen sense and granted an extension for George Groves, the WBA super middleweight titleholder, to get fit for the final against undefeated Liverpudlian Callum Smith. Groves dislocated his left shoulder in his semifinal points victory against Chris Eubank Jr. in February. The Groves-Smith final is expected to take place in September.

★★★

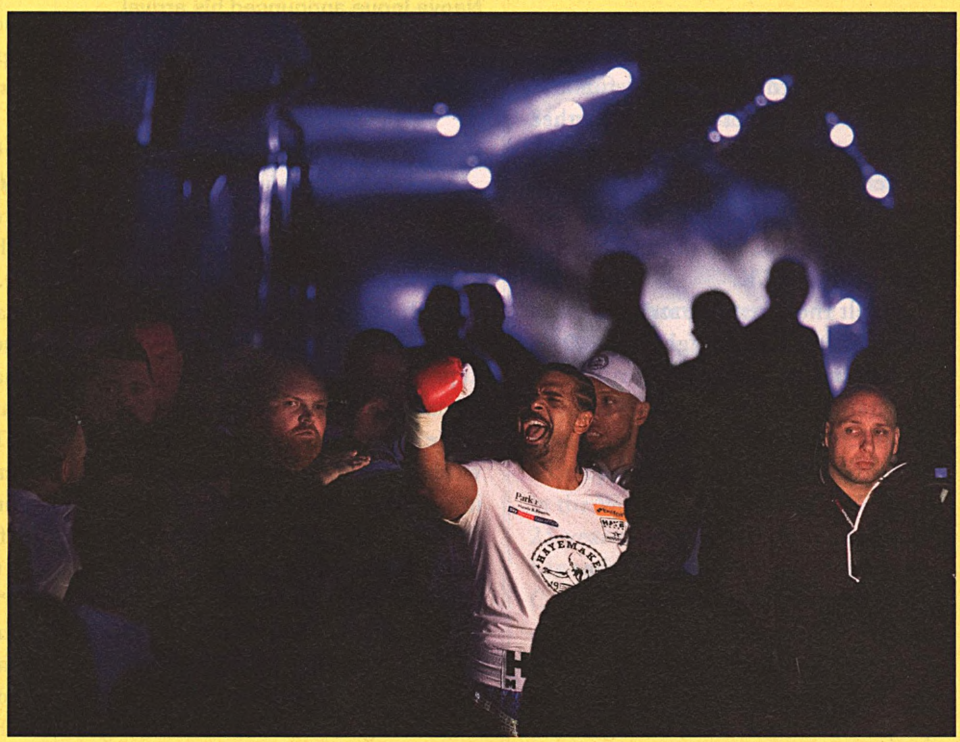
"The things I used to be able to do in the ring – instinctively – now exist only in my mind and in video clips of my old fights," admitted David Haye, the former WBA heavyweight titleholder and multiple belt-holding cruiserweight champion, on finally announcing his retirement from boxing at the age of 37. Two successive defeats to Tony Bellew, brutally knocked out in their rematch, were enough for the "Hayemaker" to sign off. I was there in his gym in south London when Haye first announced his retirement in October 2011 – on his 31st birthday with cake, candles and the whole bit – before the very lucrative grudge fight with Dereck Chisora in the summer of 2012 saw his appetite for the big occasion, and big bucks, return. But a catalog of injuries, surgeries and the slowing of his explosiveness and reflexes – his best weapons – have brought the sign-off.

"I became the first ever British boxer to unify the cruiserweight division. I then achieved my childhood dream when I beat WBA heavyweight champion of the world Nikolai Valuev, the 'Beast from the East,' in a real life 'David and Goliath' match.

"Lifting that world heavyweight championship meant I'd fulfilled a promise I'd made to my mum, Jane, at the age of 3. It also meant I was the second boxer in history – after Evander Holyfield – to win world titles at cruiserweight and heavyweight. That was an incredibly proud moment."

Haye's last performance etched the writing on the wall. Time to see sense after a terrific career that was a pleasure to cover. He knew how to grab the headlines, project himself into great showdowns, and in truth, everything he achieved at heavyweight – given his style and size – should be viewed in history as a major accomplishment.

Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for the London Telegraph.



The days of celebratory walk-ins are over for David Haye, who, at age 37, announced his retirement following his rematch loss to Tony Bellew.

JAPAN

BY NICK SKOK

Although some critics continue to nitpick at Naoya Inoue's resume, "The Monster" silenced a few more in his bantamweight debut by demolishing visiting Englishman Jamie McDonnell in the first round on May 25 in Tokyo.

Inoue (16-0, 14 knockouts) made short work of the taller, more experienced McDonnell by attacking the body with left-handed "Russian-style" hooks followed by a left upstairs that stumbled the veteran. The 25-year-old Japanese star, a former 108- and 115-pound titleholder, is now destined for the World Boxing Super Series bantamweight tournament alongside 118-pound beltholders Ryan Burnett, Zolani Tete and Manny Rodriguez. The tournament, which is slated to begin in September, will give Inoue the opportunity to further prove his status as a pound-for-pound-rated boxer and gain further exposure in foreign markets, something the McDonnell fight helped with by being broadcast live in both the U.S. (via the ESPN+ app) and the U.K.

"I felt the attention and the pressure for the fight and the upcoming bantamweight tournament," Inoue told THE RING. "Under these circumstances, I'm satisfied that I could have such a one-sided victory."

Inoue does not expect his victories to come as easy in the WBSS tournament.

"The tournament participants are champions or at an elite level," he said. "I need to focus on my preparation for them starting now."

★★★

Takuma Inoue, THE RING's 2015 Prospect of the Year, scored the third knockout win of his young career against Waldo Sabu on the Inoue-McDonnell undercard. The impressive first-round KO came after an intense training camp that took place alongside his older brother Naoya.

Naoya Inoue announced his arrival to the bantamweight division in explosive fashion, and at the expense of longtime 118-pound contender Jamie McDonnell.

Takuma's career is back on track with three wins in the last nine months after a right-hand injury kept him out of action for almost a year.

He's getting closer to a major world title, as he's sitting pretty in the rankings of the WBO (No. 8) and the WBC (No. 9). Unfortunately, getting a bantamweight title shot in the near future will be next to impossible, as the World Boxing Super Series is gearing up without him.

Focusing on his craft and staying busy rather than calling out names, Takuma told THE RING: "There's no particular fighter in my mind [that I want to fight]. Anyone is OK."

★★★

In the Inoue-McDonnell co-feature, Kenshiro Teraji (aka Ken Shiro) carved out another win with his third successful defense of his WBC junior flyweight title, scoring a second-round knockout in a rematch against Ganigan Lopez.

Shiro himself was a bit shocked by the short length of the contest, considering his first affair with Lopez went the distance in a closely scored win, but he credited his father, former middleweight pro Hisashi Teraji, who gave him the advice to use the straight right to the body that ended Lopez's hopes at redemption.

In Japan, there's generally more emphasis on making successful title defenses than division-hopping. Shiro (13-0, 7 KOs), colloquially known as "The Smiling Assassin" in Japan, told THE RING that his goal is to make 10 title defenses.

★★★

Ryoichi Taguchi lost his first attempt at defending his unified IBF/WBA 108-pound titles on May 20. The challenger (and new RING champ) was South African Hekkie Budler, who won the close but fair unanimous decision, even after he was dropped in the final round.

Taguchi's promoter, Hitoshi Watanabe, said he would ask for an immediate rematch in September before any drastic changes are made to the rankings.

"I can't think about anything now. If a rematch is ordered, then I'll think about it," said Taguchi at the prospect of winning back his titles.

His trainer, Yuta Ishihara,

explained to the Japanese media that Taguchi's mindset and physical condition were a bit strained going into the Budler fight.

"I think it was his mental condition more than anything physical," Yuta said. "There was unforeseen pressure as a unified champion and it was the hardest weight-control ever."

★★★

Strawweight standout Hiroto Kyoguchi (10-0, 7 KOs) was on the Taguchi undercard and successfully defended his IBF title against 19-year-old Filipino prospect Vince Paras.

"Since he (Paras) is younger than me, I said beforehand I'd teach him a boxing lesson," the 24-year-old beltholder told Nikkan Sports. "Eventually, I'd like to be a unified champion."

That could happen sooner rather than later.

Kyoguchi suffered a flash knockdown in Round 7 against Paras, but his unanimous decision victory puts him in position to face WBO 105-pound titleholder Ryuya Yamanaka. Kyoguchi's promoter, Watanabe-san, said Yamanaka is the target for the end of the year should Kyoguchi be successful in his next defense, tentatively scheduled for September.

Mark Anthony Barriga was mentioned as the possible September opponent, considering he's the highest ranked fighter by the IBF at 105 pounds. "We'd check a mandatory with the IBF [with that fight]." Having a mandatory out of the way would clear a path for the unification without any IBF interference.

Nick Skok is THE RING's Japanese Correspondent and can be reached on Twitter @NoSparring.

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

"Who is the next Manny Pacquiao?" It's a question asked so frequently, it makes me wonder if Filipinos in the 1970s pondered if they'd ever see another champion to root for after Flash Elorde. A few years passed before Rolando Navarrete, a hard-hitting brawler with a Devil-may-care fighting (and living) style, brought a very different form of excitement to the Filipino boxing scene.

Strawweight beltholder Hiroto Kyoguchi got up from a knockdown and used uppercuts like this one to outpoint spirited teen challenger Vince Paras.

Though Pacquiao is still in the twilight of his career, Jerwin Ancajas has already taken root as the next standard-bearer for the country's fighting scene. Ancajas has become a darling of the national media, with most major news outlets in the Philippines sending a correspondent to cover his recent (fifth) title defense, an outboxing of compatriot Jonas Sultan in Fresno, California, in May. Ancajas' rise seemed to come from nowhere, and given the lack of exposure for true grassroots development, the next champions might only pop up on the radar once they've risen to international success. Here are five fighters who may not now be household names in Manila, but could be someday soon.

Reymart Gaballo (19-0, 16 KOs)

Hailing from General Santos City, the hometown of Pacquiao, Gaballo is the biggest one-punch hitter the Philippines has seen in some time. He turned pro four years ago when he was 17 and flattened a bevy of overmatched journeymen while gaining experience as a sparring partner for Naoya Inoue and Shinsuke Yamanaka. He showed he could hang with a live challenge when he dropped and decisioned previously unbeaten Stephon Young this March in Florida to win the "interim" WBA bantamweight belt, but still needs time to develop the rest of his game – like being effective going in a direction other than forward. His promoter, Jim Claude Manangquil of Sanman Promotions, set him up in Miami with trainer Osmiri "Moro" Fernandez, a Cuban coach who is sure to teach him a few new moves along the way.

Mark Anthony Barriga (9-0, 1 KO)

It's almost improper to describe Barriga as a prospect, having competed in the 2012 Olympics and represented the Italia Thunder in the World Series of Boxing. The 25-year-old strawweight southpaw has earned comparisons to Ivan Calderon for his tight, multi-layered defense, which makes up for his lack of a big punch, and has made his two steps up in competition (unanimous decisions over title

Filipino bantamweight Michael Dasmarinas (right) came from relative obscurity to establish himself as a contender with a knockout of Karim Guerfi.

challengers Wittawas Basapean and Gabriel Mendoza) look like sparring sessions. The Panabo City native, a childhood friend and teammate of Ancajas, is promoted by Pacquiao and Joven Sports and trains out of Ancajas' Survival Camp in Cavite, Philippines. Matchmaker Sean Gibbons says the IBF No. 1 contender is expecting to fight for a title in September, either against current titleholder Hiroto Kyoguchi or a vacant belt if Kyoguchi moves to the 108-pound division.

Jhack Tepora (21-0, 16 KOs)
Tepora, of Cebu City, showed just how heavy his hands are in his first pro fight outside the country last September, striking Lusanda Komanisi's temple with a right hook that sent the South African into a violent back-flop. The southpaw Tepora, 25, had been a member of the Philippines' national amateur team and is now signed with MP Promotions and Omega Boxing. His next international assignment is set for July 15 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, when the featherweight faces once-beaten Mexican Edivaldo Ortega on the Pacquiao-Lucas Matthysse undercard.

Michael Dasmarinas (28-2, 19 KOs)
Dasmarinas, a lefty from Pili, Camarines Sur, had been an enigma early in his career, coming from a part of the country which hasn't spawned a lot of boxing talent and fighting on smaller cards around the Manila region. He had his big breakout in April, knocking out Frenchman Karim Guerfi in four rounds to win a minor bantamweight belt. In that fight, Dasmarinas showed he could be effective coming forward or countering and can work the body well. He topped it off with a one-punch left-hand KO that had all the spice of a plate of Bicol Express. The 25-year-old is promoted by Singaporean outfit Ringstar Boxing (no, not the Richard Schaefer company), which has ambitious designs for his future: They want him to face WBO titleholder Zolani Tete and compete in the World Boxing Super Series.

Mark Magsayo (18-0, 13 KOs)
Magsayo, a 22-year-old from Bohol province (and the subject of this month's New Faces), showed he is a blood-and-guts warrior in his wild shootout with Chris Avalos in 2016, getting off the canvas to stop him in six rounds. Now the WBO's No. 1-rated featherweight, Magsayo is U.S.-bound after opting not to renew his deal with ALA Promotions and has signed with a new manager and promoter. He hasn't yet picked a new trainer, but high on the priority list for his next coach should be shortening up his punches and designing a conditioning program to maintain his stamina level through the 12-round distance.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

South African boxing got a shot in the arm thanks to the diminutive Hekkie Budler lifting THE RING, WBA and IBF junior flyweight titles from Ryoichi Taguchi in Tokyo, Japan, on May 20. The odds were stacked against "The Hexecutioner," a former WBA strawweight beltholder: He was fighting in the 108-pound champion's backyard, he had a height and reach disadvantage and was coming off a heartbreaking loss in his last fight, a challenge for Milan Melindo's IBF title. Taguchi was making the eighth defense of his

Hekkie Budler's win against Ryoichi Taguchi for the RING junior flyweight championship is considered one of the most significant victories ever for a South African boxer.

WBA title, having added THE RING and IBF belts in his last fight by beating the very same Melindo.

Budler fought out of his skin, chewing up the script and spitting it out. In a career-best performance, he took advantage of the traditionally slow-starting champion by racing out of the block, slipping the jab and scoring with left hooks to the body. There were good exchanges on the inside in a fast-paced fight with Budler outworking the champion. "Our plan was to be in his face, to match him, because we knew he starts slow and ends fast," Budler confirmed.

It was never going to be easy, though. Taguchi tried hard to turn the fight around in the middle rounds, but Budler kept battling back. From then the fight ebbed and flowed. Budler was better on the inside, Taguchi on the outside. Taguchi landed some hard punches, especially with his right, but Budler would come back with two or three more.

In the last round, Budler was letting it all hang out when Taguchi cracked him with a left hook on the chin. He went down but was up in a flash, which perhaps made the referee rule it a slip. Taguchi stormed in but Budler kept low, held on and survived the dying seconds of the fight.

When the screens on the arena showed the replay, it was clear that the knockdown was caused by a punch. The referee changed his decision to a knockdown, adjusting the scorecards and changing the last round to a 10-8 Taguchi round. "I thought I slipped, but then I saw (on the replay), OK, he hit me," admitted Budler.

Budler must have had a million anxious thoughts flowing through his mind, but his superior work-rate and slicker skills won just enough rounds for him to prevail as a close but deserved winner, all three judges giving him the victory by a 114-113 tally.

It was a highly entertaining, closely contested fight with both fighters showing tremendous heart and sportsmanship. Budler scored a historic South African victory that will stand the test of time alongside Brian Mitchell's defeat of Tony Lopez, Sugarboy Malinga beating Nigel Benn, Corrie Sanders' knockout of Wladimir Klitschko and Vuyani Bungu's stirring upset of Kennedy McKinney, to name but a few.

Trainer Colin Nathan also deserves credit for coming up with the perfect game plan.

A return to the Land of the Rising Sun looks imminent for Budler after his epic performance, and he has expressed the desire to face unbeaten WBC titleholder Ken Shiro.

★★★

Cruiserweight contender Kevin Lerena rolled on, scoring a 12-round victory over Roman Golovashchenko in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Golovashchenko, although short on talent, was strong and came to win, and that was enough to make for a good fight. Lerena, THE RING's No. 8-rated 200 pounder, had a shaky start as the Ukrainian underdog came out firing on all cylinders for the first two rounds. After that, Lerena's superior speed and ring generalship took over as he outboxed his tiring opponent. A southpaw left put Golovashchenko on the canvas in the fifth round and he looked ready to go, but he survived and even found something left in the tank to stage a last-round rally. Lerena, however, had banked enough points to emerge a clear winner.

One would like to see Lerena finish opponents like Golovashchenko, but he is progressing well.

★★★

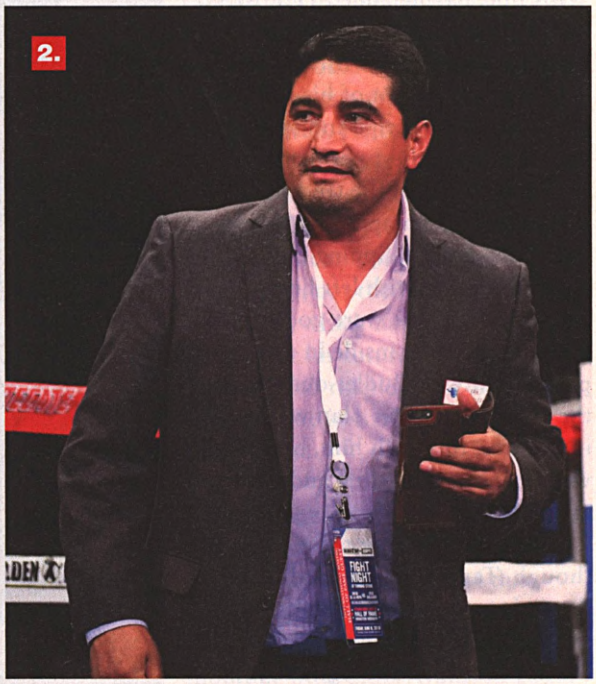
Inactivity-plagued strawweight contender Simphiwe Khonco is finally set to see some action on June 22 when he faces Filipino Toto Landero, who went the distance in a recent challenge of Knockout CP Freshmart in Thailand.

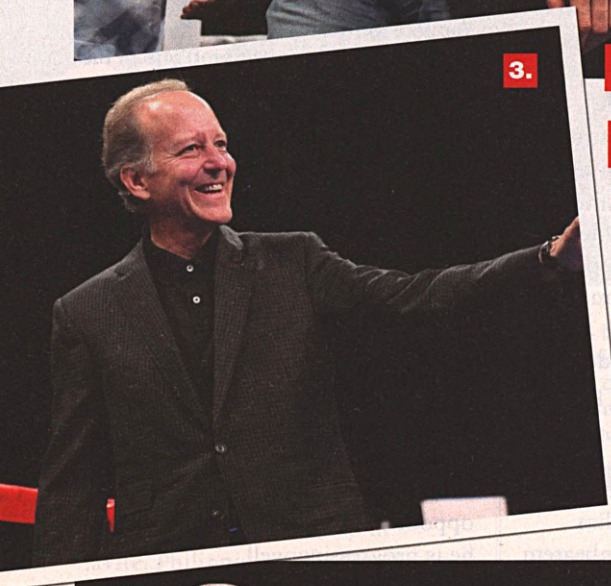
Khonco's last loss, incidentally, was against Budler in 2015.

Droeks Malan is a correspondent based in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa. You can read his blogs at couchpotatofightguru.blogspot.com and follow him on Twitter @droeksonboxing.

AT THE FIGHTS

BY LAMAR CLARK





STYLES MAKE FIGHTS

Boxing Hall of Fame Induction Weekend of Champions: 1. Vitali Klitschko 2. Erik Morales 3. Jim Gray 4. Thomas Hearns 5. Mike Tyson and Ronald 'Winky' Wright (right) 6. Miguel Cotto

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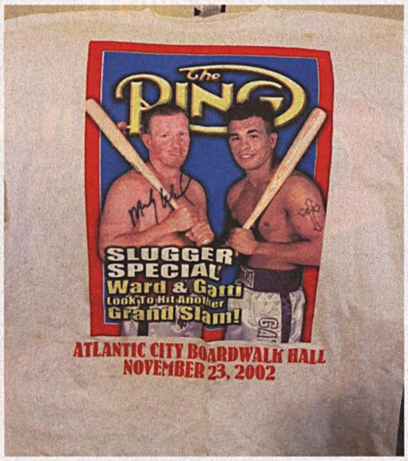

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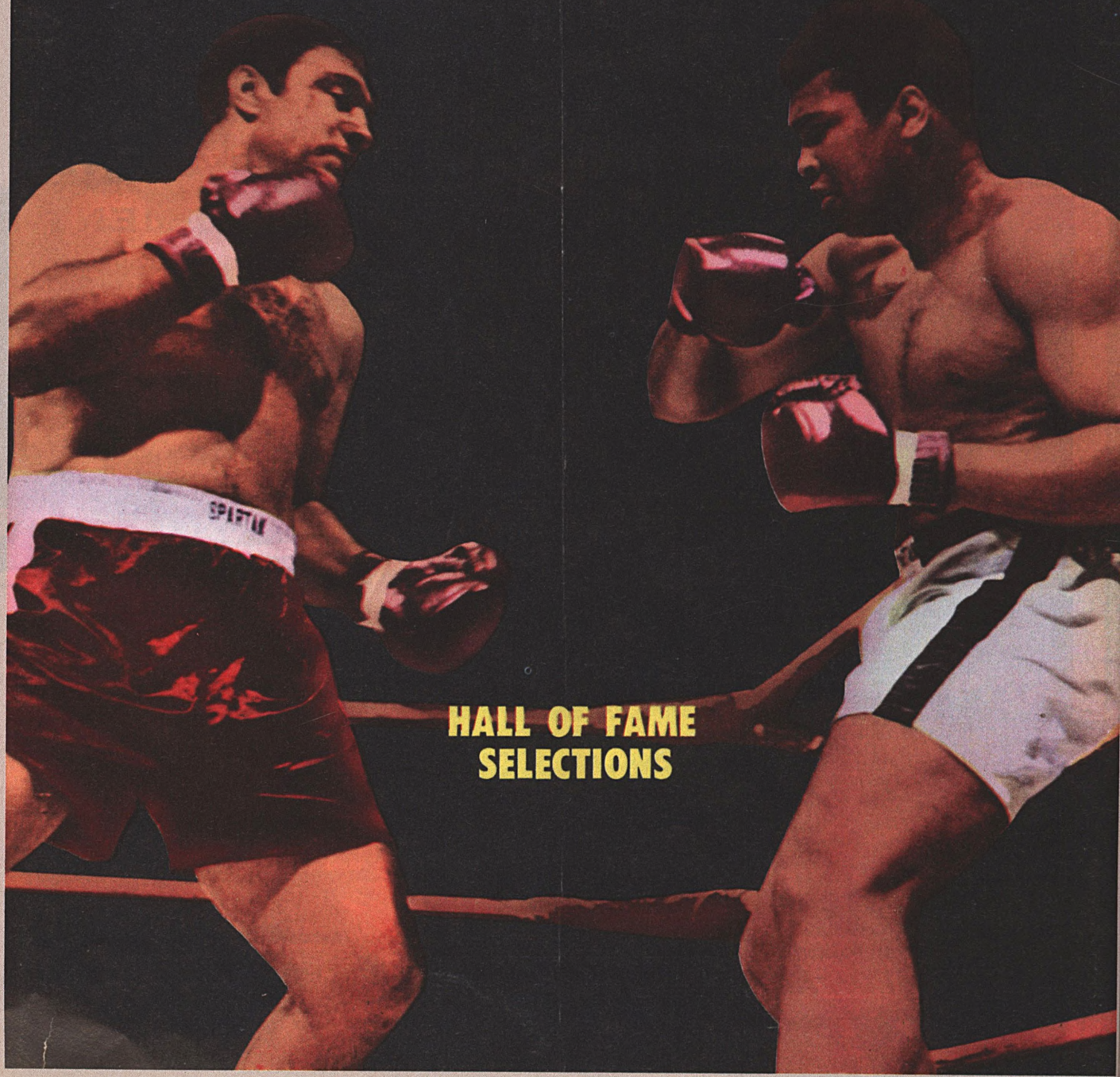

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COMING UP

Mikey Garcia is dropping down in weight to face Robert Easter Jr., but his fellow 135-pound beltholder has a significant height advantage.

JULY

JULY 14 – Regis Prograis vs. Juan Jose Velasco, junior welterweights, New Orleans (ESPN).

JULY 15 – Manny Pacquiao vs. Lucas Matthysse, welterweights, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Also, Moruti Mthalane vs. Muhammad Wasseem, flyweights (for vacant IBF title).

JULY 28 – Mikey Garcia vs. Robert Easter, lightweights (for Garcia's WBC and Easter's IBF titles), Los Angeles (Showtime).

JULY 28 – Christopher Diaz vs. Masayuki Ito, junior lightweights (for vacant WBO title), Kissimmee, Florida (ESPN+).

JULY 28 – Joseph Parker vs. Dillian Whyte, heavyweights, London (Sky Box Office); Also, Katie Taylor vs. Kimberly Connor, lightweights (for Taylor's IBF and WBA titles).

AUGUST

AUG. 3 – Billy Dib vs. Tevin Farmer, junior lightweights (for vacant IBF title), Redfern, Australia.

AUG. 4 – Sergey Kovalev vs. Eleider Alvarez, light heavyweights (for Kovalev's WBO title), Atlantic City (HBO); Also, Dmitry Bivol vs. Isaac Chilemba, light heavyweights (for Bivol's WBA title).

AUG. 18 – Carl Frampton vs. Luke Jackson, featherweights, Belfast, Northern Ireland (BT Sport).

AUG. 25 – Danny Garcia vs. Shawn Porter, welterweights (for vacant WBC title), Brooklyn, New York (Showtime).

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 15 – Gennady Golovkin vs. Canelo Alvarez, middleweights (for Golovkin's WBA and WBC titles), Las Vegas (HBO Pay-Per-View).

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